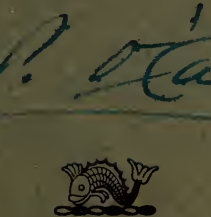
O'Callaghan, T. P.

OFFENSIVE COMBAT OF SMALL INFANTRY UNITS

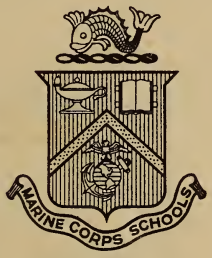
Thomas P. O'Callaghan



PUBLISHED
FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

Thomas P. Gallaghan

OFFENSIVE COMBAT OF SMALL INFANTRY UNITS



PUBLISHED
FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

✦

UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1942

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1

DEVELOPMENT OF OFFENSIVE COMBAT

	Paragraph	Page
Purpose of Offensive Combat	1	1
Steps of the Offensive	2	1

THE ADVANCE IN ROUTE COLUMN AND DEVELOPMENT

Advance in Route Column	3	2
Development	4	3
Assembly Positions	5	3

THE APPROACH MARCH AND DEPLOYMENT

The Approach March	6	8
Deployment	7	9

ADVANCING THE ATTACK

Distribution of Forces	8	12
Forms of Attack	9	13
The Envelopment	10	13
The Penetration	11	14
Placement and Direction of Main Attack	12	15
Types of Attack	13	16
Plans for Attack	14	17
Advance of Rifle Units	15	22
Action of Supporting Weapons	16	23
Assisting Adjacent Units	17	24

THE ASSAULT

The Assault	18	27

CONTINUING THE ATTACK, PASSAGE OF LINES AND REORGANIZATION

Continuing the Attack	19	30
Passage of Lines	20	30
Reorganization	21	30

PURSUIT OR ORGANIZATION OF THE GROUND

Pursuit	22	31
Organization of the Ground	23	31

SECTION 2

THE RIFLE SQUAD IN THE ATTACK

	Paragraph	Page
The Rifle Squad, Composition and Armament	24	33
Advance in Route Column	25	33
Approach March	26	33
Commencement of the Attack	27	34
Advancing the Attack	28	37
Fire Discipline	29	38
Fire Control	30	39
Fire Distribution	31	39
Range	32	39
Target Designation	33	39
Fire Orders	34	40
Fire and Movement	35	40
Support Squad	36	41
Assault	37	41
Reorganization	38	41
Pursuit	39	41
Security on the March	40	41
Flank Patrol on the March	41	43
Security in Combat	42	44

SECTION 3

THE BAR SQUAD IN THE ATTACK

The BAR Squad, Composition and Armament	43	47
General Principles of Employment	44	47
Mission	45	47
Movement	46	47
Fire Positions	47	48
Occupation of Fire Positions	48	48
Fire Direction and Control	49	48
The Attack	50	49
Displacement	51	49
The Assault	52	50
Reorganization	53	50
Antiaircraft Fire	54	50

SECTION 4

THE RIFLE PLATOON IN THE ATTACK

ASSAULT PLATOON

The Rifle Platoon, Composition and Armament	55	51
Advance in Route Column	56	51
The Approach March	57	53

	Paragraph	Page
Advancing the Attack	58	58
Isolated Attack	59	59
Methods of Advancing the Attack by the Platoon	60	61
The Assault	61	64
Illustrative Example of Enveloping Tactics of a Platoon in the Attack	62	64
Reorganization	63	66
The Pursuit	64	66
Security on the March	65	66
The Platoon as an Advance Party	66	66
The Platoon as a Rear Party	67	67
The Platoon as a Flank Guard	68	69
Security in Combat	69	69

SUPPORT PLATOON

Missions	70	70
Formations	71	70
Movements	72	70
Reconnaissance	73	71
Flank Protection	74	71
Antiaircraft Protection	75	71

SECTION 5

WEAPONS PLATOON, RIFLE COMPANY, IN THE ATTACK

GENERAL

The Weapons Platoon, Rifle Company, Composition and Armament	76	73
Duties of Personnel of Command Group	77	74
Route March	78	74
Approach March	79	74
Tactical Employment	80	76
Orders	81	76

THE LIGHT MACHINE-GUN SQUAD AND SECTION

General Principles of Employment	82	76
Missions	83	77
The Advance in Route Column	84	77
The Approach March	85	77
Positions	86	78
Orders	87	79
Occupation of Positions	88	79
Conduct of Fire	89	80

	Paragraph	Page
Communication	90	80
Advance to Subsequent Positions	91	80
Reorganization or Consolidation of Positions	92	81
Ammunition Supply	93	81

THE 60mm MORTAR SQUAD AND SECTION

General Principles of Employment	94	81
Duties of Leaders	95	81
Mission	96	82
Advance in Route Column	97	82
Approach March	98	82
Firing Positions	99	83
Displacement	100	83
Fire Direction and Control	101	84
Reorganization	102	84

SECTION 6

THE RIFLE COMPANY IN ATTACK

GENERAL

The Rifle Company, Composition and Armament	103	85
Company Headquarters	104	85

THE ASSAULT RIFLE COMPANY

Route Column	105	87
Approach March	106	87
Assembly Areas	107	92
Deployment for Attack	108	93
Conduct of the Attack	109	98
Continuing the Attack	110	100
The Assault	111	104
Reorganization	112	104
Pursuit	113	105
Organization of the Ground	114	105

THE RESERVE RIFLE COMPANY

The Reserve Company	115	107
Missions of the Reserve Company	116	107
Formations	117	107
Movements	118	107
Reconnaissance	119	107
Flank Protection	120	108

SECTION 7

THE AA-AT PLATOON
BATTALION WEAPONS COMPANY

	Paragraph	Page
The AA-AT Platoon, Composition and Armament	121	109
Characteristics	122	109
Missions	123	109
Duties of Command Group	124	109
Method of Movement	125	110
Crew Requirements	126	110
Approach March	127	110
Preparation for Action	128	111
Antitank Security in Attack	129	112
Positions	130	112
Occupation of Position	131	113
Fire Direction and Control	132	113
Displacement	133	114

SECTION 8

THE 81mm MORTAR PLATOON
BATTALION WEAPONS COMPANY

The 81mm Mortar Platoon, Composition and Armament	134	117
Characteristics	135	117
Mission and Responsibility	136	117
Duties of Leaders	137	118
Approach March	138	119
Initial Reconnaissance and Organization of Base of Fire	139	120
Firing Positions	140	120
Mortar Observation Posts	141	121
Occupation of Position	142	121
Assignment of Suitable Targets	143	121
Fire Direction and Control	144	122
Platoon Leader's Order	145	123
Conduct of the Attack	146	123
Displacement	147	124
Coordination with Rifle Units	148	125
Consolidation of Captured Position	149	125
Ammunition	150	125

SECTION 9

THE MACHINE-GUN PLATOON

BATTALION WEAPONS COMPANY

	Paragraph	Page
The Machine-Gun Platoon, Composition and Armament	155	127

THE SQUAD AND SECTION

General	156	127
Duties of Leaders	157	128
Route March	158	128
Approach March	159	128
Movement into Position	160	129
Gun Positions	161	129
Fire Control and Discipline	162	130
Displacement	163	130

THE PLATOON

Duties of Command Group	164	131
Mission	165	131
Approach March and Deployment	166	132
Reconnaissance	167	133
Orders	168	134
Fire Direction and Control	169	134
Conduct of the Attack	170	135
Flank Protection	171	136
Masked and Open Positions	172	136
Ammunition Supply	173	136
Communication	174	137
Anticipating Displacement	175	137
Displacement	176	137
Reorganization or Consolidation of Positions	177	138
Troop Leading, The Machine-Gun Platoon in Attack	178	139

SECTION 10

THE BATTALION WEAPONS COMPANY

	Paragraph	Page
The Battalion Weapons Company, Composition and Armament	181	143
Characteristics	182	143
Command Group	183	143
Administration and Supply Group	184	144
Route Column	185	144
Development	186	145
Approach March	187	145
Reconnaissance During Approach March	188	147
AA and AT Protection of Battalion Assembly Area	189	147
Attack Missions	190	148
Methods of Employment, Machine-Gun Platoons	191	149
Methods of Employment, Machine-Gun Platoons, Defined	192	150
Methods of Employment, Mortar Platoon	193	152
Attack	194	152
Distribution of Positions and Missions	195	152
Fire Control	196	153
Target Areas	197	153
Machine Gun Fires From Initial Base of Fire	198	153
Determination of Fire Data	199	154
Company Commander's Order	200	155
Occupation of Positions	201	155
Cover and Concealment	202	156
Factors to be Considered in Selecting Positions for Caliber .30 Heavy Machine Guns in the Attack	203	156
Initiative of Leaders	204	157
Communications and Liaison in the Attack	205	157
Displacement	206	158
Orders For Displacement	207	159
Supply	208	159
Covering Reorganization	209	159
Resuming Attack After Reorganization	210	160
Consolidation	211	160
Weapons Companies of Reserve Battalions	212	161
Special Missions	213	161
Attacks Against Villages	214	161
Night Attacks	215	161
Illustrative Situations	216	162

SECTION 11

THE BATTALION HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

The Battalion Headquarters Company, Composition	217	179
Battalion Headquarters	218	179
Company Headquarters	219	182

	Paragraph	Page
Intelligence Section	220	182
Supply Section	221	183
Medical Section	222	183
Communication Platoon	223	183
Summary of Approximate Distribution	224	184
Detailed Duties	225	184

SECTION 12

THE MARINE INFANTRY BATTALION

The Marine Infantry Battalion	226	187
Advance in Route Column	227	187
Position of Battalion Commander in Route March	228	187
March Discipline	229	187
Trains and Ammunition Supply	230	188
Reconnaissance in Route March	231	188
Covering Detachments in Route March	232	188
Battalion in the Approach March	233	189
Advance by Bounds	234	189
Conduct of the Approach March	235	190
Organic Infantry Weapons in the Approach March	236	190
Reconnaissance During the Approach March	237	191
Orders for the Approach March	238	191
Formation in Approach March	239	191
Assembly Areas	240	193
Development of the Plan	241	193
Estimate of the Situation	241½	194
Plans of Attack	242	194
Base of Fire	243	195
Zones of Action	244	199
Attack Formations	245	199
Terrain	246	200
Battalion Attack Orders	247	201
Responsibility of the Battalion Commander in the Attack	248	202
Conduct of the Attack	249	202
Flank Protection During the Attack	250	202
Duties of the Battalion Commander During the Attack	251	203
Position of the Battalion Commander in the Attack	252	203
Signal Communication	253	204
Use of Reserve	254	204
Conduct of the Assault	255	205
Continuing the Attack and Pursuit	256	205
Reorganization	257	205
Organization of the Ground	258	206

THE RESERVE BATTALION

The Reserve Battalion	259	207

SECTION 1

DEVELOPMENT OF OFFENSIVE COMBAT

1. Purpose of Offensive Combat.—a. The purpose of offensive combat is the attainment of victory by physical disorganization of the enemy forces. Only the offensive has these positive qualities which seek and promise a decision. The first of these qualities is initiative. The choice of objectives, the selection of decisive directions, the concentration of the attack forces, the choice of time, and the actual creation of opportunity, all spring from initiative. With initiative goes the high morale that promotes confidence and the vigorous action essential to successful combat.

b. The action of an army in the field is directed toward a military objective. For the purpose of securing this objective a number of secondary military objectives must be assigned to subordinate commanders. The attainment of these objectives helps the main force in turn to succeed. Thus the main military objective is won by a series of many smaller successes. Every force should so maneuver as to gain its objective by the minimum expenditure of casualties and energy. Eventually, these maneuvers will force the enemy to interpose his troops between the objective and the force fighting for it. The maneuvering force must then attack. The ultimate objective then becomes the defeat of the enemy in battle. Offensive combat seeks victory through disorganization of the enemy's armed forces which is accomplished by overcoming or destroying his moral and physical strength. Tactical victory is attained by attacking the enemy in a decisive direction with an overwhelming combination of maneuver, fire power and shock action. By maneuvering, the infantry can take maximum advantage of the terrain of the battlefield to place its fires accurately upon the enemy. The volume of fire inflicts losses on the enemy and reduces his effective strength and morale. The shock or threat of it, causes the enemy to yield or to be destroyed.

2. Steps of the Offensive.—a. In offensive combat, infantry units pass through certain successive steps. These steps in their usual order of sequence are: (See Figure 1)

(1) Advance in route column and development.

(2) Approach march and deployment.

(3) Advancing the attack (fire and movement).

(4) The assault.

(5) Continuing the attack, passage of lines, or reorganization.

(6) Pursuit or organization of ground.

b. In some cases, the enemy will occupy several positions, one behind the other, instead of a single position as

shown in Figure 1. In such cases, instead of overcoming a single hostile position, it will usually be necessary to penetrate the hostile zone and overcome several successive hostile positions. (See Figure 2.)

THE ADVANCE IN ROUTE COLUMN AND DEVELOPMENT

3. **Advance in Route Column.**—a. Infantry units begin an offensive by advancing toward the enemy in some formation suitable for marching. This is called the advance in route column.

b. These columns are so marched as to place the different units in preparatory positions from which they can be readily moved to their allotted tasks.

c. The troops are kept in column as long as it is safe to do so, because this formation facilitates control and lessens the time required for deployment.

d. Troops in close order formation may suffer heavy losses in a short time if subjected to hostile fires as they present a large concentrated target. Therefore, while advancing in route column, each separate column sends out one or more covering detachments to obtain information of the enemy and to give timely warning so that units in close order can change their formation before coming under hostile fire. The work performed by these covering detachments is called reconnaissance and security. (See Figure 4.)

e. A well trained enemy force on the defensive may be expected to take every means to conceal its dispositions, the location of the organized localities in its main battle position, and the location of its flanks. Since no well organized attack can be planned until the major details of such organization are known, it is the attacker's first task to ascertain them.

f. Details of the enemy organization within his position can best be determined by ground observation from some commanding point; by air observation, including aerial photographs; by intensive reconnaissance; and by a knowledge of the defender's usual tactical measures. Intensive measures are taken to ascertain the hostile dispositions by employing positive means. An estimate of how the enemy may defend the position will also be necessary.

g. The location of the defender's forward elements, and of his flanks, can best be ascertained by driving in the enemy forces which screen them. Such is the mission of the leading elements of the attacking forces as soon as contact is gained. It is a mission which is usually attempted even without orders, and it is accomplished if within the capabilities of the forces involved.

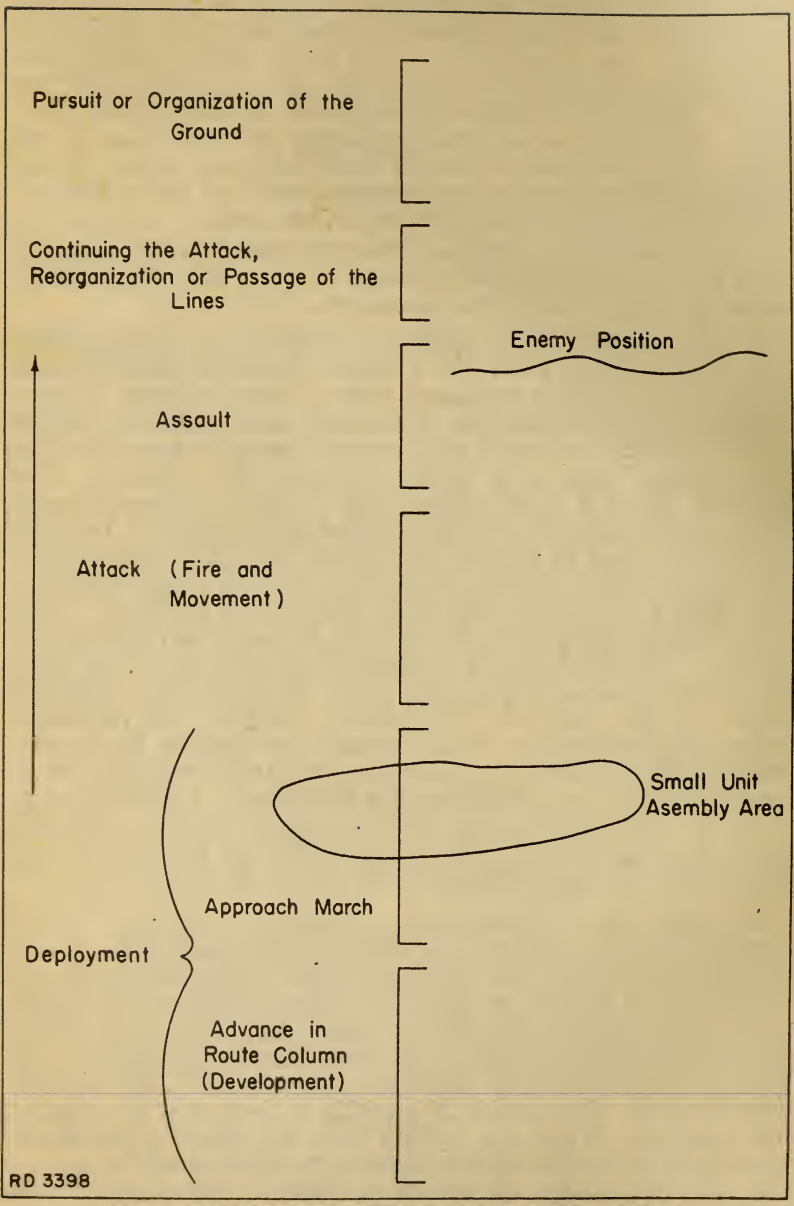
h. Frequently the attacker's leading elements find it impossible to drive in the hostile covering forces unassisted. In this case, an action known as a reconnaissance in force is necessary. The commander of the main force may reinforce his advance elements with additional rifle units, and with the bulk of his infantry supporting weapons or the artillery available. The action is continued all along the front and on the flanks until the enemy covering force has been driven in, the leading elements are in close contact with the main position, and have ascertained the location of his flanks.

i. In order to surprise the enemy and to attain security from hostile air attack, the advance in route column will often be made under the cover of darkness.

4. **Development.**—a. During the advance in route column, large units seldom march in a single column because it takes a long time for them to deploy from a single column. Therefore, as they draw near the enemy the large units are broken up into separate columns which march parallel to each other, each column keeping in touch with adjacent columns. This breaking up of a single column into several columns usually takes place gradually. This is called development. Development takes place in rear of the division assembly areas, which are located usually beyond the range of hostile light artillery. This means about six miles from the hostile position. After coming under hostile fire, deployment is known as the approach march. The commanders of small units, therefore, are more concerned in the approach than in the development. Divisions break up into separate regimental columns and regiments break up into battalion columns and so on through the smaller units, each remaining in route column until it becomes necessary to take up an extended order formation. (See Figure 3.)

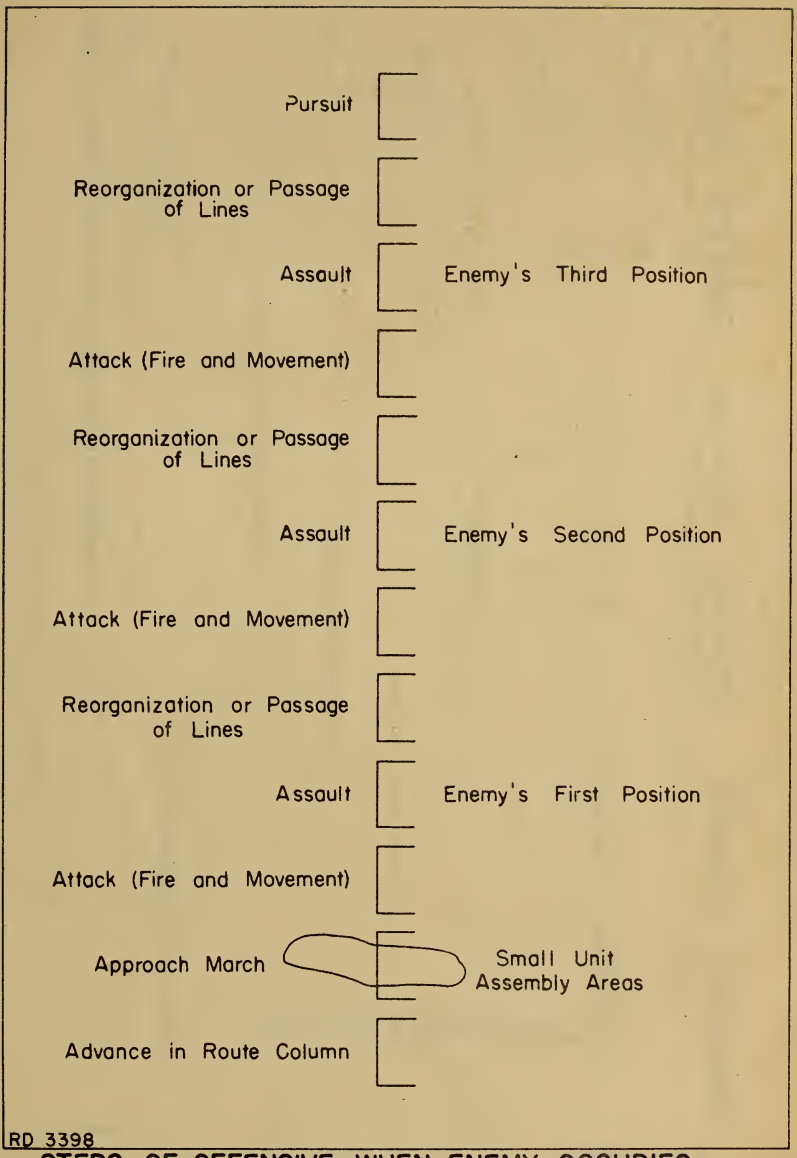
b. The development of a division usually terminates in the occupation of assembly positions by front line units preliminary to deployment for attack or defense.

5. **Assembly Positions.**—a. Assembly positions are so selected as to be, as far as practicable, screened from air and ground observation and reconnaissance. Terrain which provides natural protection against mechanized attack is desirable. The position should be such that the troops have favorable lines of advance to their combat positions. The position is protected by antitank weapons and local security detachments. Occupation of position is protected by supporting weapons. When the terrain does not afford concealment, the assembly position of a division in daylight should be beyond the effective range of hostile artillery. Subordinate commanders assigned assembly positions may in turn assign more advanced assembly positions to the component units of their command as knowledge of the situation and of plans becomes available. Battalion assembly positions are usually located in the last available covered position in rear of the line of departure.



THE SUCCESSIVE STEPS OF AN OFFENSIVE

FIGURE 1



STEPS OF OFFENSIVE WHEN ENEMY OCCUPIES SEVERAL SUCCESSIVE POSITIONS

Figure 2

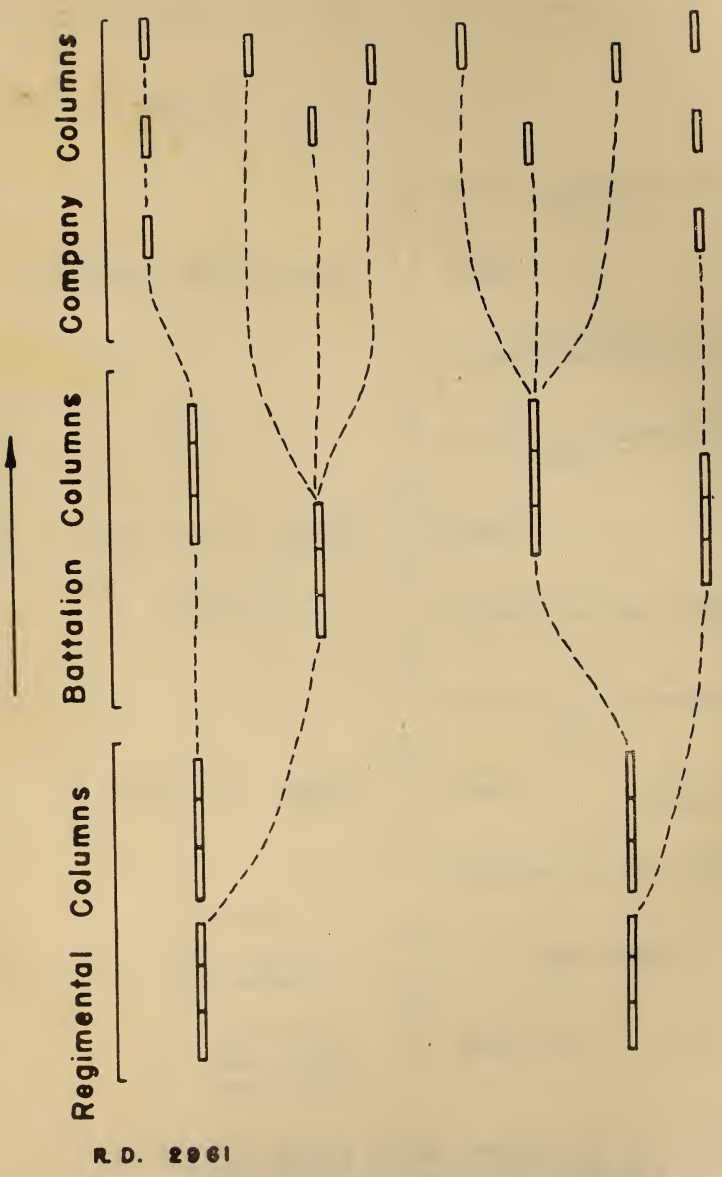


FIGURE 3. ADVANCE IN ROUTE COLUMN

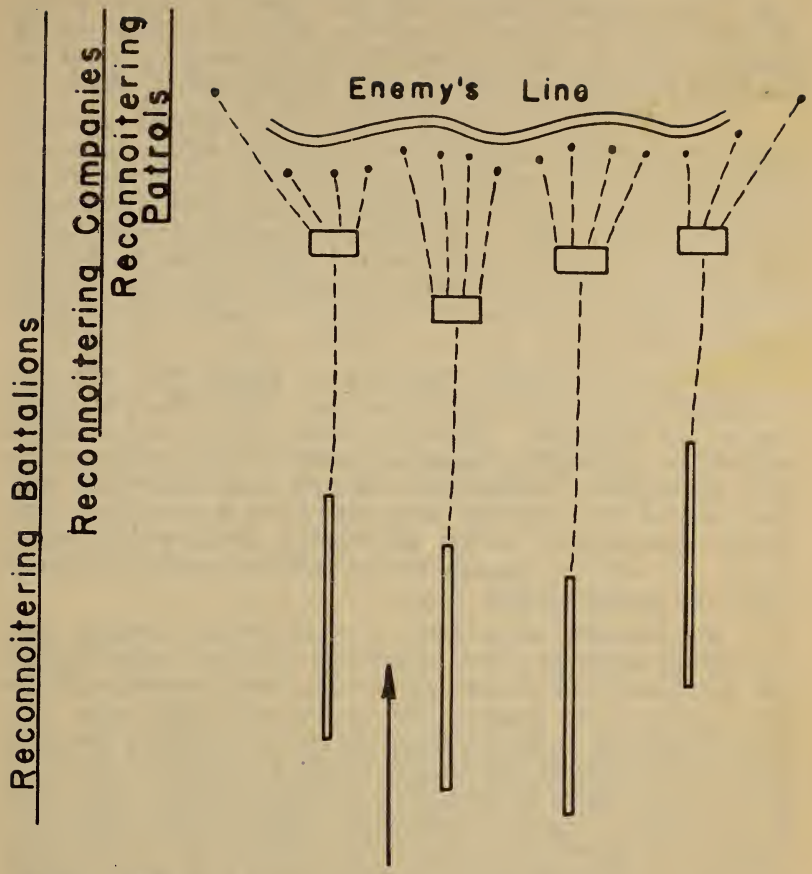


Figure 4. RECONNAISSANCE.

490276 O - 42 - 2

THE APPROACH MARCH AND DEPLOYMENT

6. The Approach March.—a. The approach march is the advance from the point where the zone of hostile fire is entered, up to the point where it becomes necessary to return the enemy fire in order to continue without undue losses.

b. The approach march is said to be a **covered approach** when it is executed behind forces sufficiently strong to insure effective protection against ground attack. It is said to be an **uncovered approach** when the advancing unit is unprotected by other troops. During an uncovered approach march each unit provides its own advance guard which moves by bounds to successive objectives. Distance between objectives depends on the terrain. Preferably battalion bounds will be from 1,000 to 1,200 yards; those of companies 500 to 600 yards.

c. After entering the zone of hostile fire, infantry continues its advance until it reaches a point where effective fire can be delivered. Infantry cannot combat the enemy's artillery or his high-flying airplanes and is at a disadvantage if it attempts to combat the enemy's long-range rifle and machine-gun fire, since by stopping to fire it provides a stationary target upon which the hostile artillery can easily range. No serious damage can be inflicted upon the enemy with long-range infantry fire.

d. Infantry units seek to avoid hostile artillery fire, high-flying airplanes, and long-range rifle and machine-gun fire by taking full advantage of cover and concealment, by the posting of air guards, and by assuring that every rifle and machine gun in the hands of the combat troops is prepared to open fire instantly against the hostile airplanes. It may not always be desirable to open fire on airplanes during this stage of the attack. Such fire should be opened when troops are attacked by planes or when it is obvious that observation planes have discovered the troops or when it is impracticable to avoid observation by hostile planes. Supporting artillery may open fire on hostile batteries which have been located.

e. However, rapid advance and the utilization of cover are not sufficient protection against hostile artillery fire and aerial bombing; infantry units must change their formation from route column to a formation suitable for the approach march so that concentrated targets will not be offered to the enemy's fire and so that the troops will be suitably disposed to take up the fight when they reach a point within effective range of the enemy. Any extension of the front of a unit for combat, in excess of its normal route march formation, is called deployment. As a result of deployment, troops are finally placed in combat formation suitable for offensive action, leading eventually to line of skirmishers.

f. As a general rule, a zone of advance or a definite direction and frontage is assigned to each unit before taking up the approach march. Each unit commander then determines how to dispose the component parts of his command based on the width of the zone of action or frontage assigned him, and the nature of the terrain or other factors.

g. It will generally be necessary at some stage of the combat to use all the troops in order to gain decisive results, but in the beginning each commander usually holds out a portion of his unit for emergencies. This emergency force is called the reserve in units above the company. The emergency force of a company is called its, "support." The remainder of a unit is called its assault echelon. (See Figures 5 and 6.)

h. The holding out of reserves by the successive echelons at the beginning of an action results in deployment in depth.

i. During the approach march, systematic reconnaissance is carried out with a view to locating shelled and gassed areas. These areas and other points, such as villages, defiles, road junctions, and small woods, likely to be registered upon by hostile artillery fire, are avoided.

j. In the approach march, it will sometimes be necessary to cross fire-swept zones by having individuals work their way forward separately and rejoin their units on a designated position. This method of advance is called infiltration.

7. **Deployment.**—a. Deployment of a unit is complete when its elements are so disposed that they can cover their front with fire, and when its assault platoons are able to open fire, either immediately without change of formation, or after a simple and previously prescribed change. Infantry units deploy as skirmishers in order to bring fire upon the enemy, or in order to present a less vulnerable target. Units once completely deployed under fire are committed to action, and senior commanders, to a certain extent, lose control. Premature deployment must be avoided because it lessens control, causes unnecessary fatigue and loss of time, and results in taking tired troops into action. Also, and more serious still; if a wrong direction is taken, premature deployment will magnify the error, thus jeopardizing the success of the attack. Infantry once completely deployed makes even minor changes of direction with difficulty, and the difficulty increases with the width of front of the unit. If units are completely deployed in the wrong direction under fire, it is usually necessary to send in reserves which are deployed facing in the correct direction. The original units are then assembled as reserves.

b. Deployment may take place gradually during the approach march or complete deployment may be made direct

from route columns, which are successively broken up into still smaller columns, until deployment is complete.

c. During the approach march, sufficient distance and interval are maintained between these smaller columns to prevent any two of them being taken under the burst of the same hostile shell or aerial bomb.

d. Usually the approach march is conducted by daylight. At this time units are frequently disposed from the beginning in echelons corresponding to those of complete deployment. When the approach march is made at night, units usually advance by battalions with the small columns disposed one behind the other until a point near the line of departure is reached, where complete deployment for attack is made.

e. By daylight, the approach march may be conducted in a series of bounds, direction being frequently maintained by compass. Each small column directs its march from one to another of the successive points which define the route of advance.

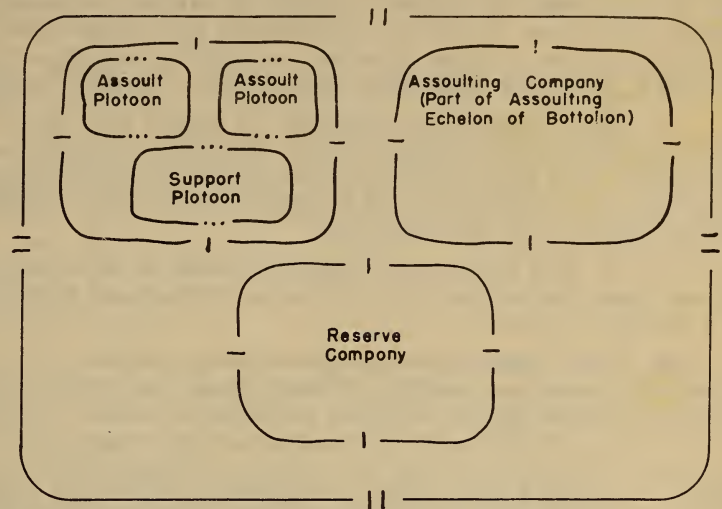


FIG. 5. DEPLOYMENT OF AN ASSAULTING BATTALION.

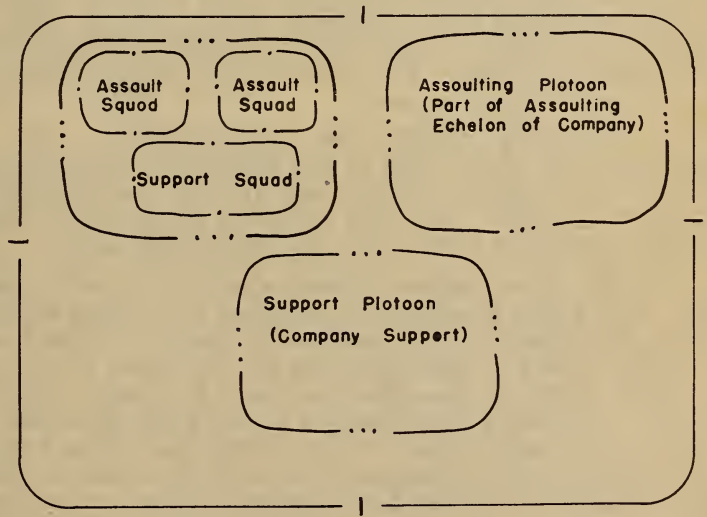


FIG. 6. DEPLOYMENT OF AN ASSAULTING COMPANY.

R.D. 2961

ADVANCING THE ATTACK

8. **Distribution of Forces.**—a. In the offensive, troops are distributed into two or more principal tactical groupings: one or more main or decisive attacks, in which the greatest possible offensive power is concentrated to bring about a decision, and one or more secondary or holding attacks whose mission is to render maximum assistance to the main attack.

b. Main attacks are designed to secure the objective and to destroy the hostile force. Secondary attacks are designed to hold the enemy in position, to force him to commit his reserves prematurely, and to prevent him from reinforcing the front of the main attack.

c. In each tactical grouping, the mass of the available means of combat is concentrated in a main effort and is applied in a decisive direction.

d. Main attacks are characterized by narrow zones of action, by strong support of artillery, tanks, and other supporting weapons, by the effective support of combat aviation, and by deep echelonment of reserves. The commander of attacking forces looks to his main attack to decide the issue of battle. To insure this result he assigns to the main attack every available man and weapon which can be spared from the holding attack without so weakening the holding attack that it cannot possibly accomplish its own mission. Also, if the main attack is to be delivered by an interior unit, he assigns it a frontage, or zone of action, much narrower than in the holding attack. This zone, however, is sufficiently wide to permit maneuver room.

e. Secondary attacks are characterized by lack of depth, reduction of reserves to the minimum, maximum fire power in the attacking echelon, and by wide zones of action for the attack units. They will therefore be assigned limited objectives initially. These are called holding attacks.

f. The term "holding attack" should be clearly understood. It is a real attack and is expected to achieve tangible results. In order to fix in position the enemy on its front, the holding attack is delivered with all the power of fire and movement of which the attacking force is capable. Troops engaged in a holding attack are as strongly imbued with the offensive spirit as are those of the main attack. The holding attack force is never designated as such in orders. While holding attacks are pressed with utmost vigor, and attempt to gain ground, it is possible for such attacks to accomplish a portion of their purpose even if sections of the line do not advance. This is especially true of small units, such as the rifle company, which may employ part of its strength as a holding attack while the remainder executes the main attack. When the holding attack attains unexpected success and the main attack is held up, the holding attack may be exploited

by the use of the general reserves. In such cases it then becomes the main attack. If the holding attack is to be successful its strength must not be dissipated over its entire front. The bulk of the force is employed in a principal effort within the holding attack.

9. Forms of Attack.—a. There are but two forms of attack; namely, the envelopment and the penetration.

b. An envelopment consists of attacking simultaneously the hostile front and one or both hostile flanks. The main attack is directed against the flank or rear of the initial disposition of the enemy's main forces and toward an objective in rear of his front lines. It seeks to surround that portion of the enemy's forces in front of the objective. It is assisted usually by a secondary or holding attack directed against the enemy's front.

c. A penetration is the piercing of the enemy's defenses on a front wide enough and in sufficient depth to rupture his position. This attack is followed by attacking the hostile flanks created by the penetration.

10. The Envelopment.—a. When employed.—The main attack is conducted in the form of an envelopment unless a penetration is required by the mission, or indicated by the presence of factors favoring a penetration. Infantry maneuver attains its most decisive success through flanking action. Rifle units undertake envelopments by preference. The delivery of flanking fire is an outstanding feature of the offensive tactics of small units.

b. Advantages.—The envelopment strikes with its maximum force at a portion of the enemy's position which is undefended, or defended only lightly. Initially, at least, little resistance is expected. By taking the enemy at a disadvantage, it is expected that the attack will progress rapidly and favorably. Also, the envelopment results in a convergence of effort by the attacker, while the effort of the defender must be divergent. An envelopment avoids attacking on ground chosen by the enemy, and forces him to fight in two or more directions to meet the converging efforts of the attack. An envelopment which strikes the defender's flank or rear so as to avoid any part of his organized front and small arms fire from that front is preferable. It minimizes losses, handicaps the defender's ability to meet it promptly, compels the defender to meet an attack on ground chosen by the attacker and, when successful, is more decisive.

c. Where employed.—The hostile flank or flanks to be selected for envelopment will depend largely on the following factors:

(1) The time required to attack the flank.

(2) The location of a key terrain feature behind the hostile position, capture of which will result in the enemy's defeat.

(3) The presence or absence of covered routes of approach toward the selected flank.

(4) The strength of the known or suspected enemy defenses on a flank.

(5) The terrain over which the envelopment will progress including concealed or defiladed approaches.

(6) The presence or absence of observation for supporting weapons.

(7) Terrain suitable for the employment of the attacker's tanks, if any.

These factors will be present or absent in infinite variety. It will be seldom that all of them will favor one flank to the entire exclusion of the other. Sometimes most of the factors which effect both flanks will be so nearly balanced that a single one may be decisive in choosing the particular flank to be attacked.

d. Interval between the holding attack and the envelopment.—The interval between the closest flanks of the holding attack and the envelopment, in units the size of a regiment and smaller, will rarely be so great that each element of the attacking force cannot mutually support the other. Preferably the interval is covered by observed infantry fire delivered either by the holding attack or the envelopment or both. If this is impracticable, and the terrain within the interval is not naturally impassable, then the interval must be protected by the attacker's reserves.

e. Enemy reaction.—The principal enemy reaction to an envelopment will be to extend his flank or flanks to meet it. His secondary reaction will be to counterattack, usually against the exterior flank of the enveloping force, but sometimes through the interval between the holding attack and the envelopment. To meet either reaction, the attacker's reserves are usually posted initially behind the axis of advance of the envelopment, ready to move in either direction, and available for either offensive or defensive purposes.

11. The Penetration.—a. When attempted.—The penetration is usually the most costly form of attack and the most difficult to push home. It is not, therefore, attempted unless it is required by the mission, or unless there exist one or more factors which favor it. The commander of a small unit such as a battalion or regiment will seldom be afforded an opportunity to decide whether his main attack will be a penetration or an envelopment. His orders for the attack will usually be assigned by a superior. These orders will prescribe the form of attack to be employed.

The main attack passes through some portion of the area occupied by the enemy's main forces and is directed on an objective in his rear. It is characterized by the complete rupture of the enemy's dispositions; the seizure of the objective by operations through the gap; and the envelopment of one or both flanks created by the breakthrough.

b. Factors favoring.—The following factors favor a penetration:

(1) When an undefended, or weakly defended, gap exists between hostile elements, penetration of which will result in splitting the hostile forces in two parts.

(2) When the hostile position is too extensive for the force holding it, resulting in a lack of depth.

(3) When the flanks of the hostile position rest on strong or impassable objects.

(4) When there exist well defiladed approaches leading into the hostile position.

(5) When the attacker's mission is such that no time is available for executing an envelopment.

c. Enemy reaction.—The chief enemy reaction to a successful penetration may be expected to be one or more counterattacks against the flanks, and especially the base, of the salient created by the penetration. If the counterattack is successful there, the penetrating force may be cut off or isolated. For these reasons, the main attack which is being conducted as a penetration is organized in great depth, to provide for formed reserves being available even after the penetration has reached its objective. Such reserves are available to widen the salient, and to resist enemy reaction against it.

12. **Placement and Direction of Main Attack.**—a. Whether the main attack is to be conducted in the form of a penetration or an envelopment, much of its success will depend on the skill of the commander in selecting the place to make it, and the direction in which it is to advance. Every main attack should strike through hostile weakness, and is directed toward a vital area, such as a dominating or key terrain feature within or behind the enemy position, capture of which will result in the loss of the position.

b. The attacker strives to assault the weaker, and not the stronger portions of the enemy position. This is called, "soft spot," tactics. A soft spot in the enemy's position is one which is known, or has been found to be, weakly defended or not defended at all. Frequently this fact cannot be determined in advance. In this case a "soft spot" is defined as a route of approach affording cover, concealment and defilade leading into the hostile position, and preferably in the direction of the vital area which it is desired to capture.

13. Types of Attack.—a. In addition to being classified as to form as penetration and envelopment, offensive combat may also be classified as to type as follows:

(1) Attacks as the result of meeting engagements.

(2) Attacks against an enemy already in position and more or less prepared to receive an attack.

(3) Coordinated attacks.

(4) Uncoordinated or piecemeal attacks.

(5) Attacks in special operations, such as in woods, across unfordable streams, raids, landings on hostile shores and under cover of darkness. Pursuit is also a type of offensive action. Some of these special types are discussed in other texts.

b. Attacks in meeting engagements.—A meeting engagement is a conflict between two opposing forces, one or the other, or both, of which is not fully developed for battle. In such a situation great advantage will accrue to that force which first succeeds in making effective preparations for combat. It is an occasion calling for hasty reconnaissance, quick decision, and prompt and rapid movements. A strongly conducted penetration may be more effective than an envelopment.

c. Attacks against a position.—In most cases the enemy force will be encountered by the attacker in a position more or less deliberately organized for defense. Plans to attack such a position will be characterized by thorough reconnaissance, deliberate movement, more centralized control and maximum coordinated use of firepower of all supporting weapons.

d. The coordinated attack.—A coordinated attack is one which is fully coordinated as to time. Since it requires time to move all units which are to participate initially in the attack to the area or line from which the attack will be launched, such an attack cannot be made as promptly as one in which the assault units are put into action one after the other. It is, however, much the stronger attack, and is used in every case where all the factors favoring an uncoordinated attack are not present.

e. The uncoordinated attack.—An uncoordinated, or piecemeal, attack results when the assault units are committed to action as they arrive in position to attack. Such an attack can be launched with the minimum loss of time, but it is liable to be defeated in detail. All of the following factors should be present to justify an uncoordinated attack:

(1) Temporary combat superiority, i.e. the attacker is temporarily stronger because of numbers, position, fire support, or disposition. It must be estimated that such superiority can be maintained until the capture of the objective.

(2) Insufficient time for a coordinated attack.
(3) Limited objectives.

14. Plans for Attack.—a. As in every type of military operations, the commander who contemplates an attack must first estimate the situation, arrive at a decision, and evolve a plan. The plan amplifies the decision and goes into such detail as will enable each subordinate to understand the commander's will. The plan, eventually, is transmitted to subordinates in the form of orders. The evolution of a plan of attack is a continuing process, which may start during the earlier stages of deployment, and may not end until the conclusion of the attack. Usually the initial plan is complete before the issuance of the orders for the attack, but as the action progresses new plans must constantly be evolved. Surprise is an essential element of a successful attack. Its effect should be striven for in small as well as large operations. Infantry effects surprise by concealment of the time and place of the attack, screening of its dispositions, rapidity of maneuver, deception, and the avoidance of stereotyped procedure.

b. Every plan of attack contains the following essential elements:

(1) Time of attack.
(2) Place of attack.
(3) Relative strength of holding attack and main attack.
(4) Formations.
(5) Zones of action.
(6) Scheme of maneuver.
(7) Objectives.
(8) Line of departure.
(9) Detailed Instructions for next subordinate units.
(10) Fire support.
(11) Reserves.
(12) Supply.
(13) Communications.

c. Time of attack.—The longer the attack is deferred, the longer the defender will have to perfect his organization. The attack is therefore launched as soon as practicable. The following factors will govern the time for launching the attack:

(1) Reconnaissance should be complete. That is; at least the location of the enemy's forward elements, and of his flanks, must be known.

(2) Time should be afforded to issue and transmit orders, and to permit all subordinates to reconnoiter, preferably by daylight, and issue their own orders.

(3) There should be sufficient daylight remaining to permit the attack at least to make a lodgement within the hostile position.

(4) All assault units should be in position for attack.

(5) All available supporting weapons should be in position.

d. Formations.—All assault elements of the regiment are organized with three subordinate assault elements. Thus, three formations for attack are possible:

(1) Three assault units abreast.

(2) Two assault units abreast and one in reserve.

(3) One assault unit in advance and two in reserve.

The formation to be chosen will depend upon the mission, the width of the frontage assigned, the form of attack, the direction and strength desired for the main attack, enemy dispositions, and the necessity for retaining reserves for furthering the attack or providing the necessary security. A formation with three assault units abreast, and a small fraction in reserve is frequently appropriate for units making the holding attack. A formation in which two assault units are employed and one in reserve is able to deliver a strong initial attack, while retaining a strong reserve to influence future action. A formation which employs as much as two thirds of its strength in reserve is appropriate for a unit making a main attack, operating on an exposed flank or when the enemy situation is obscure.

e. Zones of action.—The area through which an attacking unit operates is known as its zone of action. Within its zone each unit is responsible for overcoming all enemy resistance encountered. Zones will vary in width in accordance with the mission, the strength of the attacking unit, the terrain, the probable enemy resistance to be encountered, and the form of attack. The ideal zone is one which follows a natural terrain corridor, that is, a valley of suitable width bounded on both sides by ridges, edges of woods, or villages, and leading in the direction of advance. Ideal corridors will seldom be found. If one is available the boundaries of the zone pass over or through the crests of the hills or ridges bordering it. A boundary which cannot be found on the ground is of no value to attacking troops. Therefore, whether the boundaries can be made to correspond with those of a terrain corridor or not, they pass through easily recognizable topographical features. Because of the increased freedom of maneuver afforded to companies and smaller units, their ability to change direction more readily, and the necessity for them to seek cover and concealment, it is unusual to assign boundaries for zones of action in which such units must operate. Instead they are controlled by assigning an objective, a line

of departure, a frontage, or a compass direction of advance, or any combination of these.

f. Frontages.—The frontage to be covered by infantry units in the attack depends upon many considerations, including the strength and mission of units, the terrain, the nature of the hostile resistance, supporting fires, and the training, discipline, and condition of the troops. Unequal distribution of troops will be the rule. Extremely wide frontages, assigned to units through necessity, are covered by leaving gaps between subordinate elements rather than extending the usual interval between individuals. It is frequently advantageous to create gaps between units to facilitate flanking fire of machine guns. This procedure often provides an effective means of extending the front, at the same time facilitating the fire support of the attacking units.

The usual limits for war strength units with flanks covered by other troops are indicated as follows:

Unit	Frontage in yards
Squad	50-75
Platoon	100-200
Company	200-500
Battalion	500-1,000
Regiment	1,000-2,000

g. Line of departure.—The assignment of a line of departure is another means of control and coordination. It is the line which the leading attack elements cross at the hour set for the attack. That it may readily be found on the ground, it is specified to pass along or through easily recognizable topographical features. It should be approximately at right angles to the direction of advance, and should have cover in rear. Since it is highly undesirable for the attacker to have to fight for possession of the line of departure, a line is selected which is already in possession of friendly troops. When a readily recognizable line of departure cannot be designated because none exists, a commander may designate an area from which to launch the attack.

h. Base of Fire.—The emplacement of the supporting weapons of the unit of the attacking echelon in position to support the attack of a maneuver element; usually to a flank, by means of overhead fire, or through gaps in the line. The fires delivered are closely coordinated with the attack of the maneuver elements. For example, a base of fire is said to be established when units of the attacking echelons have been placed in departure positions and supporting weapons occupy firing positions with assigned target areas or sectors of fire to support the attack.

i. Fire support.—(1) By organic means.—Provision for adequate fire support of assaulting units is one of the

principal parts of the attack plan. For this purpose the commander plans to utilize the fire of all supporting weapons organically a part of his command, or which have been attached, to form his **base of fire.** The organization of a **base of fire** comprises:—

Establishment of the attacking echelon on a departure position.

Emplacement of the supporting weapons of the unit in a firing position to support the advance of the attacking echelon.

Synchronization of the debouchment of the attacking riflemen with the fire of the supporting weapons from the base of fire.

(2) Attack supported by tanks.—Infantry leaders conduct their units rapidly forward when following a tank attack, usually at about 500 yards distance. Every effort is made to reach the objective as close behind the tanks as possible. The method of advance does not differ materially from that of an attack not preceded by tanks except in speed of execution.

(3) By other means.—The organic weapons of an attacking unit will seldom be sufficiently numerous or powerful to insure the success of the attack. The attack must be supported by other weapons, which are controlled by higher headquarters but respond to the requests of the attacking commanders. Support is of two general types, direct support, and general support. Fire delivered by a unit in direct support will usually be more timely and effective than by one in general support, but direct support results in a certain relinquishment of control of the fire by the superior commander.

j. Control of battalion supporting weapons.—In a coordinated attack, battalion supporting weapons are initially controlled from a base of fire, usually on higher ground not usually more than 500 yards in rear of the line of departure, from which the greater part of the front of the unit can be covered. Control of the heavy weapons by the battalion commander insures massed fire support and coordination with the attacking echelon as a whole under the most usual conditions of combat. When the attack is made on a broad front and centralized control becomes difficult the Battalion Commander may assign subordinate units of the Weapons Company to missions of close support of particular assault units.

In exceptional cases where the terrain over which the attack is being made is heavily wooded or extremely broken to an extent which interferes materially with communication to the battalion command post, part or all of the battalion weapons may be attached to rifle companies in order to bring about coordination by a commander in a position to observe the action of the attacking echelon and the quality of the supporting fire it is getting.

k. Reserves.—(1) The strength of the unit held in reserve is determined by the front over which the unit must attack, the nature of the attack, the terrain and the enemy situation.

The holding out of reserves at the beginning of an action results in deployment in depth.

In the attack, reserves are disposed in such manner that they may be promptly brought into action for any of the following missions:

To cover the flanks of assaulting units under fire.

To repel counterattacks.

To assist the advance of assault units by fire.

To assist the progress of adjacent units.

To maneuver against the flanks of resistance holding up assault units.

To replace assault units.

To fill gaps between assault units.

To deliver the final blow.

To cover the withdrawal in case of repulse.

To initiate the pursuit when ordered.

(2) Control.—There are two general methods of controlling the reserve. It may be directed to await orders in a specified place, or it may be ordered to follow the assault units at a specified distance. The supports of companies and platoons, where adequate communication facilities do not exist, are more readily controlled by directing them to follow the assault at a specified distance. They then move from cover to cover, keeping approximately the specified distance behind the assault. Reserves of larger units are better controlled by directing them to await orders in a specified locality.

(3) Location.—While it is desirable that the reserve receive reasonable protection from hostile fire, tactical utility is paramount. It is usually posted in an initial locality from which its axis of advance will be in the direction of the point of its probable subsequent employment. This means that the reserve will usually be in rear, or approximately the rear, of the main attack.

l. Scheme of maneuver.—The scheme of maneuver is the visualization of the commander expressed in orders for the conduct of subordinate units with respect to each other in order that the terrain may be utilized to full advantage and that the maximum team play between assault units, reserves, and supporting fires may be accomplished. The scheme of maneuver is specific only as far as the terrain is known, or can be seen by the attacking troops, or just so far as the hostile resistance can be reasonably estimated. Beyond this point it will be general in nature. For units smaller than a battalion it is usually sufficient to prescribe initially only a simple combination of fire and movement for the capture of

the ground in sight of the troops, or to assign a direction of attack and the objective. During the attack the commander will be required to issue additional orders in accordance with the development of the situation.

m. Objectives.—In planning the attack the commander assigns an objective for his entire force. Such an objective is usually a dominating terrain feature, capture of which by the attacker will result in the defeat of the defender. Each subordinate unit then exerts its best efforts toward the capture of its portion of the objective. In the course of the advance, however, disorganization, casualties, loss of direction, and depletion of ammunition, to a greater or lesser degree are sure to result. It is therefore frequently necessary, however undesirable, that each attacking unit halt from time to time for the reorganization of supporting fires and its component units. Such halts are usually necessary after the capture of intermediate areas of enemy resistance. These probable intermediate reorganization areas are known as successive objectives. Until the main hostile resistance has been broken, infantry units advance by bounds between these successive objectives (terrain lines) where the fire support for each subsequent bound is organized. Unit objectives should not, as a rule, be beyond the range of the supporting weapons of the unit, or call for a displacement of the fire base to insure continuity of support.

n. Missions for subordinate units.—Units of the attacking echelon are given their battle tasks in terms of initial positions, directions of attack or zones of action, and objectives. Reserve units are assigned an initial location and contemplated direction of advance. Infantry supporting weapons are assigned their specific combat missions, including first firing positions and initial targets, target areas, or sectors of fire. Plans provide for their prompt displacement.

15. Advance of Rifle Units.—a. When not in close contact with the enemy prior to the attack, rifle units of the attacking echelon ordinarily advance a long distance before they are justified in opening fire. In the early stages of the attack, they are mainly under fire from hostile artillery and long-range infantry weapons. The action of artillery and infantry supporting weapons or tanks is initially relied upon to gain fire superiority. The best protection of the advancing troops against losses consists in combining a rapid advance with the utilization of cover from view. At ranges beyond 400 yards, rifle company weapons open fire only when other available fire support is inadequate.

b. The participation of the riflemen in the fire fight, if not required earlier, becomes indispensable when they come under the fire of hostile rifle units and especially when the supporting weapons lift their fires from the foremost hostile elements. Rifle units seek to combine their fires with

those of the supporting weapons, which neutralize the fires of rearward hostile elements firing on the attacking echelon. The combined fire effect creates the conditions which make possible the movement of the attacking echelon. The rifle units exploit these conditions by alternate fire and movement. While some of the riflemen open fire to hold down the fire of the enemy resistances, others advance from one cover or firing position to another. Enough rifles must be continued in action to keep down the enemy's fire; units most favored by terrain or fire support push forward while those most exposed support the advancing elements by fire. Slackening of hostile fire gives the signal for the advance, which in each small unit is executed by fractions of varying size or by individual rushes as required by terrain conditions and hostile fire effect. Every lull in hostile fire is utilized to push groups to the front and occupy points from which covering fire, particularly the flanking fire of the light machine guns, will facilitate the further progress of the attacking units.

16. Action of Supporting Weapons.—a. The infantry supporting weapons, displacing forward when necessary, cover the advance of the rifle platoons to close range, protect their flanks, and assist in the reduction of hostile resistance.

b. The light machine guns furnish the rifle platoons close support, usually by firing through gaps in depth across the front of their own unit or to flank the front of adjacent units; or they are held ready to make rapid advance to positions for flanking fire. They are employed for frontal fires in grave emergencies only.

c. The heavy machine guns execute long-range overhead fires, antiaircraft missions, and protect the flanks of advancing rifle units against counterattack. Advancing by echelon, they extend in depth the fire power of the attacking riflemen. Missions close to the attacking echelon are limited to exceptionally favorable opportunities of terrain and situation. They form the most important protective element in the successive bases of fire.

d. The advance of the mortars is so regulated as to enable them to respond instantly to the needs of the rifle platoons and place prompt and effective fire upon targets of opportunity. The 81mm mortars bring down immediate fire on isolated points of resistance which the artillery has not suppressed. The leaders exercising fire control must know at all times by direct observation the location of their target and of the front-line infantry. The mortars are emplaced as far forward as defilade and ammunition supply permit. Requirements as to observation take precedence over all other considerations. The distance of emplacements from the attacking echelon does not exceed 800 yards and is usually much less. Mortar fire is controlled by observation from near the piece; exceptionally by wire communication to an

490276 O - 42 - 3

observation post. The 60mm mortars are used in a similar manner by the rifle company commander. They are emplaced as far forward as consistent with fire direction by the company commander and with the ammunition supply. They are kept within 400 yards of the front line. Their requirements for defilade are very slight. Their fire allows riflemen to maneuver more freely, advance close to the enemy, and prepare for assault. Their precision is often sufficient to put hostile automatic weapons out of action. They thus constitute the outstanding infantry supporting weapons in the attack.

e. Antitank weapons are initially located to prevent a sudden onrush of enemy tanks. Usually antitank guns are held under cover near positions to be occupied promptly on need. Firing positions cover the probable routes of advance of hostile tanks. In open terrain, a portion of the guns are located on the flanks of each battalion, with the lighter weapons distributed along the departure position. They follow the advance by bounds, some always ready to fire. The battalion weapons displace forward early, following the attacking echelon. 37mm antitank guns move forward after the lighter weapons have reached their new position and when sufficient distance from the attacking echelon has been gained to permit a rapid displacement by motor carriers to an advanced cover position. Both the regimental and battalion weapons take as their special targets all hostile vehicles within effective range when not imperatively required for antitank missions.

17. Assisting Adjacent Units.—a. The attack will not generally encounter a uniformly held continuous line of defense. It will have to overcome a defense consisting of a series of defended areas of varying size disposed in depth and covering the main routes of advance, with relatively lightly held intervals. By a stubborn defense of these localities, the defense will seek to limit the penetrating action of the attack and overwhelm by counterattack the assaulting elements which succeed in penetrating its front. There will consequently be inequality in the resistance encountered on the front of attack and as a result the assaulting units will not make uniform progress. The following general principles apply to the advance of small units in the attack:

Get through the hostile position rapidly.

Attack resistance only when:

It is necessary for our own advance.

Directed by higher authority.

Assist adjacent units:

When it is necessary for our own advance.

When directed by higher authority.

When it will further the general scheme of maneuver of the higher command.

b. Mutual assistance between attacking units is frequently necessary. Assistance by movement is usually more effective than assistance by fire. Such movement, however, must be strongly supported by the fire of all available weapons whether under the control of the unit being assisted, of elements of the unit making the movement, of a superior unit, or of all three. Units mutually assist each other by movement when by doing so they either:

Further their own progress, or

Further the progress of the adjacent unit without seriously interfering with their own mission.

c. Units mutually assist each other by fire when assistance by movement is impracticable. A combination of fire and movement may be advantageous when a clear distinction is not apparent between the above factors.

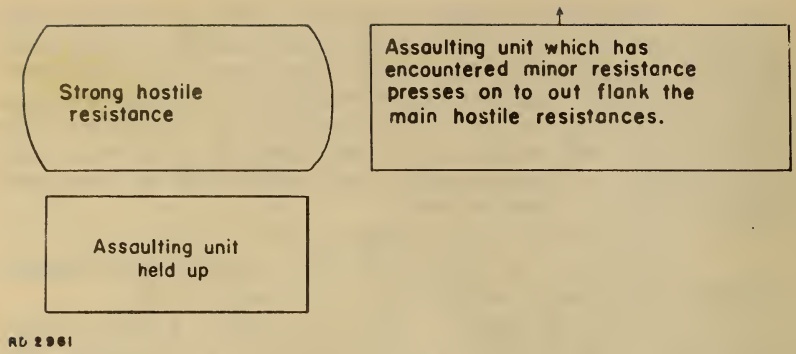


FIGURE 7. THE OUTFLANKING OF A STRONG HOSTILE RESISTANCE

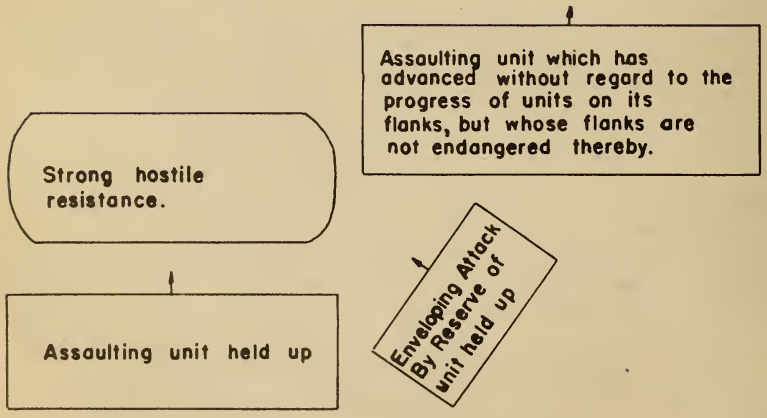


Figure 8. THE ENVELOPING OF A STRONG HOSTILE RESISTANCE WHICH HAS BEEN OUTFLANKED.

RD 2961

d. Elements of the assaulting echelon held up are not reinforced when the resistance in their front can be outflanked. By their own fire and that of the accompanying weapons, they attempt to neutralize or mask the opposing resistance and prevent the latter from enfilading the attacking elements advancing on the flanks.

e. The leading elements of each unit advance straight to the front, push closely as possible to the hostile position and immobilize the enemy with fire. While this is being done, additional forces (reserves) are brought up on the flanks to envelop the enemy or gain his rear.

f. In many cases, however, the mutual flanking fire of hostile centers of resistance will be unfavorable to enveloping action. In such cases, a penetration is necessary.

g. During the attack, reserves do not passively follow the troops engaged in the fire fight. On the contrary, one of the purposes of the disposition in depth is to enable the attacking unit to act in any direction.

h. Therefore reserves are employed primarily to envelop points of resistance passed by a portion of the assaulting echelon, to continue the action of assaulting echelons which have been disorganized, depleted, or exhausted, and to take in flank hostile counterattacks directed at a fraction of the assaulting echelon. (See Figure 9.)

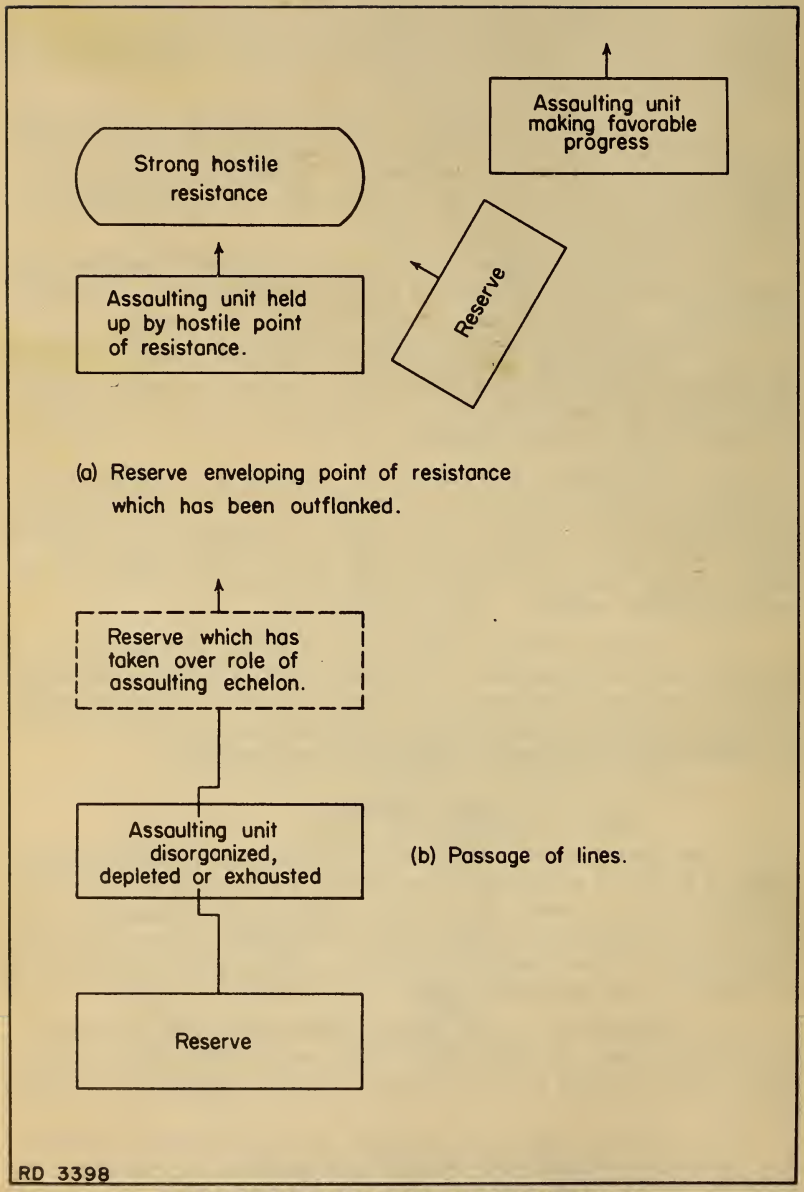
i. As one terrain feature is occupied, the advance to the next line is organized. Fire bases are rapidly organized. While the enemy's resistance remains unbroken, no movement is made without covering fire. Ammunition supply must be so organized as to insure continuous fire support.

THE ASSAULT

18. **The assault.**—a. The assault is the last advance to the enemy's position without intermediate halt. Assaults may be initiated and executed by a small unit (squad, platoon, company, or battalion) in order to take immediate advantage of a weakening in the hostile resistance. They are delivered by each unit at the earliest moment that promises success.

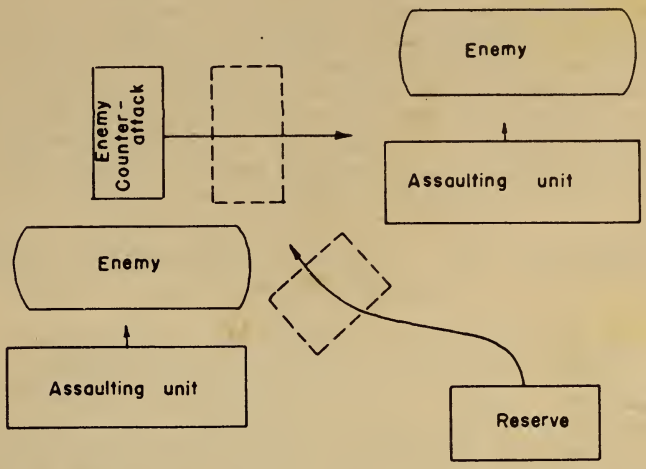
b. Sometimes in making assaults, the rifle fire can be dispensed with. In such cases, the assaulting troops make their final advance to the enemy's position either at a walk or run.

c. Another class of assault is the prepared assault. A prepared assault is one made on a portion of the enemy's position which can be taken only by a penetration, supported by artillery. In such cases, a heavy volume of artillery, machine gun, and mortar fire is put on the enemy's position. Under cover of this fire, the assaulting troops work their way

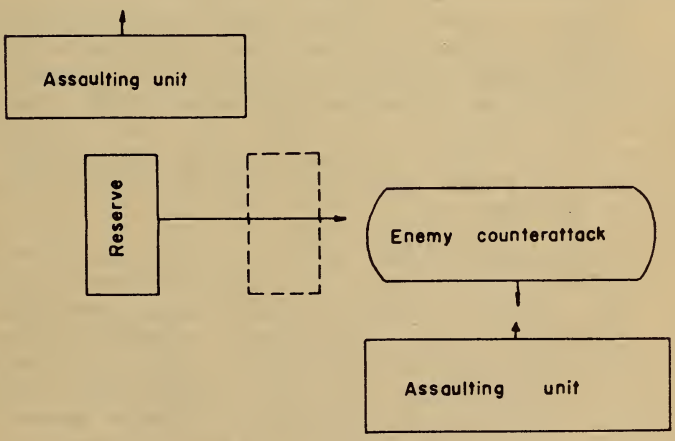


THE EMPLOYMENT OF RESERVES

Figure 9



(c) Reserve employed to take in flank a hostile counterattack directed at a section of the assaulting echelon.



RD 2961

FIGURE 9 (CONTINUED)

forward as close to the enemy's position as possible and when the preparatory fire lifts or ceases at a prearranged signal or hour, assault the enemy's position.

d. When the hostile position has been captured, units are reorganized if necessary, prepared to continue the attack, take up the pursuit, or organize the ground for defense as may be required by the orders for the attack. Supports and reserves still in hand are held, as far as required, to execute a passage of lines or to meet any counterattack which the enemy may make. At every halt security detachments are sent out to the front and flanks to prevent surprise.

CONTINUING THE ATTACK, PASSAGE OF LINES, REORGANIZATION

19. **Continuing the Attack.**—The attack of successive positions in rear of the first is made in a manner similar to that explained for the attack of the first position. As soon as the first position has been seized, each assault unit continues on to seize the other successive enemy positions within its zone of action. The advance is usually begun in a deployed formation and the retreating enemy closely followed. If the distance to the second position be considerable and the opening of fire on this position by our infantry is not immediately justifiable, approach formations may become desirable.

20. **Passage of Lines.**—During assault, the smaller assault units (squads, platoons and companies) often become badly mixed and disorganized, and during prolonged attacks larger assault units become exhausted and depleted. In such cases reserves pass through or preferably past the flank of disorganized assault units and continue the attack while the latter halt, reorganize, and follow as reserve. This is called a passage of lines.

21. **Reorganization.**—The battalion objective is selected so as to include the key point of the hostile defenses in the battalion zone of action. After this objective has been taken the units of the battalion are reorganized. Security detachments are pushed out to the front and flanks. Supporting weapons cover the reorganization. Contact is made with adjacent and higher units. Each commander replaces leaders who have become casualties, redistributes ammunition, brings up reserve ammunition from the rear and reports the condition and position of his unit to the next higher commander. He then awaits further orders, prepares to continue the attack, begins organization of the ground, or initiates pursuit in accordance with his previous orders.

PURSUIT OR ORGANIZATION OF THE GROUND

22. **Pursuit.**—a. Troops in the assaulting echelon, after capturing an enemy position, fire on any of the enemy who attempt to escape and then prepare to continue the attack, take up the pursuit, or organize the ground for defense as may be required by orders for the attack. The pursuit proper, which is the act of following a retreating enemy to complete his capture, demoralization, or destruction, is begun by units in the assaulting echelon on orders of higher commanders; when the danger of a counterattack seems removed and when reorganization has been sufficiently effected. During the period of reorganization contact with hostile troops must be maintained by all assault elements. If the retreating enemy gets beyond range, numerous patrols are sent out to follow and maintain contact.

b. As soon as practicable, a coordinated pursuit of the enemy is inaugurated. Any reserves which are still intact are employed for this purpose; they pass through the assaulting echelon and take up the pursuit, the former assault echelon following in reserve as soon as reorganized. If no reserves are intact, the assaulting echelon, after reorganization, takes up the pursuit.

c. Pursuing troops advance in formations adapted to the situation. While under hostile fire they are deployed as described in advancing the attack and approach march. When not under fire they advance in route column.

d. The enemy is vigorously attacked wherever found. While part of the troops are attacking in front, others work around the flank to cut off and destroy or capture the retreating troops.

23. **Organization of the Ground.**—a. Whenever the advance of a unit is definitely held up and further progress is impossible, the troops dig in and hold their ground. This is called initially the establishment of a hastily prepared defensive position.

b. The longer troops remain stationary, the more thoroughly is the ground organized. At first each man digs himself an individual shelter. Later on these shelters are connected and gradually continuous trenches are developed. Obstacles are put out in front and everything possible is done to reduce losses and facilitate holding the ground.

SECTION 2

THE RIFLE SQUAD IN THE ATTACK

24. The Rifle Squad, Composition and Armament.—The rifle squad consists of the following:

Composition:

1 Corporal (Squad Leader)
8 Privates and Privates First Class

Armament:

8 Rifles
8 Bayonets
1 Automatic Rifle (When armed with M-1903 Rifle)
1 Grenade Launcher, M1
1 Grenade Discharger (When armed with M-1903 Rifle)

Hand grenades may be added to the above.

If the squad is increased to 13 men, a sergeant is added to each squad and becomes the squad leader. The corporal becomes the assistant squad leader and is armed with a Thompson Submachine Gun. The additional men are armed with the rifle and bayonet.

NOTE: Grenade dischargers are to be discarded when the present supply of rifle grenades is exhausted.

25. Advance in Route Column.—During the advance in route column the rifle squad maintains its usual place in its platoon. The squad leader carries out the orders of his platoon leader, and is responsible for the march discipline of his squad.

26. Approach March.—a. In the approach march, squads are in squad column, skirmish line, or wedge. The initial formation is prescribed by higher command. Subsequently this formation may be changed by the platoon leader, or by the squad leader, to meet the situation. Usually, the squad front on deployment should not be much over 50 paces and the squad in column should not be much over 50 paces in length. Distances and intervals between individuals are decreased as visibility decreases. The squad leader or a designated member of the squad is responsible at all times for direction.

b. Formations: Squad Column—is the most vulnerable to fire from the front and cannot use all of its weapons, but is easy to control. It is especially adapted to movement in areas exposed to artillery fire and aerial bombardment, in woods, fog, smoke, darkness and for readiness for action toward a flank.

Wedge—affords the best control, offers the poorest target and greatest use of the squad weapons. It is especially adapted to unclarified situations when readiness for action in any direction is required. It is frequently used when emerging from cover or a defile and to take best advantage of cover on broken ground. It is the most general formation for traversing zones near the enemy but beyond effective rifle range of known hostile locations.

Skirmish Line—is the least vulnerable to frontal fire and can use all of its weapons but is hard to control. It is used for rapid dashes across open spaces, particularly shelled areas, when confronting hostile positions within effective small-arms range and in advancing the attack by fire and movement.

c. Scouts.—A squad in the leading echelon of an assault platoon is usually preceded by its scouts.

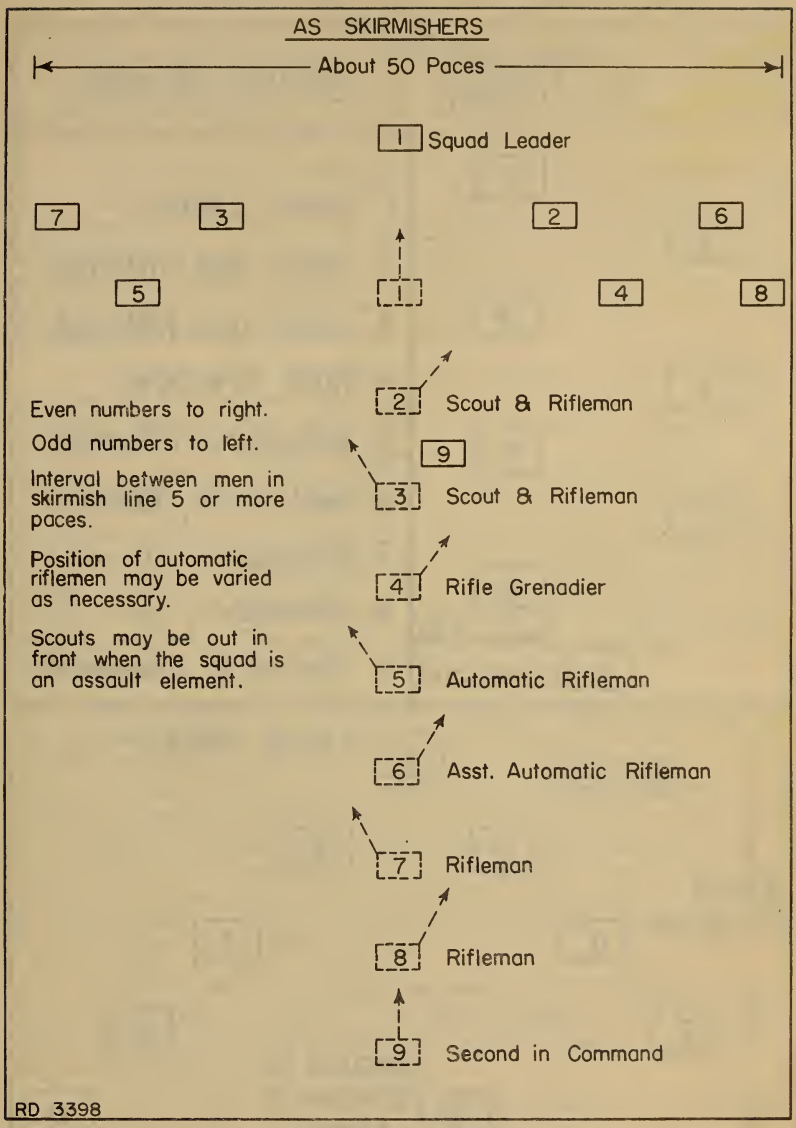
d. Position and duties of squad leader.—During the approach march the position of the squad leader is at the head of or in advance of his squad. His duties are to guide on the platoon leader, study the ground to the front and to control and regulate the movement of members of his squad.

e. Position and duties of assistant squad leader.—The position of the assistant squad leader in deployed formation is in rear of the squad. He prevents straggling, elongation of the squad, and insures its orderly advance. During the absence of the squad leader, he takes charge of the squad.

f. Passing through long-range fire.—When it is necessary to pass through enemy artillery or long-range machine-gun fire, formations which will minimize losses are taken. Squad leaders, may be directed to reform their squads at a certain point or on a certain line beyond the area which is under fire. In this case each squad moves independently of the others. If cover is available, the squad leader by taking advantage of it works his squad forward. If there is no cover, he works the squad across by bounds, one or two men at a time or directs members to advance individually and reassemble on the designated line.

27. **Commencement of the Attack.**—a. When the scouts are halted by fire the squad leader, when necessary, gets the squad under cover. He then studies the terrain searching for covered routes for the forward movement of his squad, and decides how he will employ his squad in order to best drive forward to his objective.

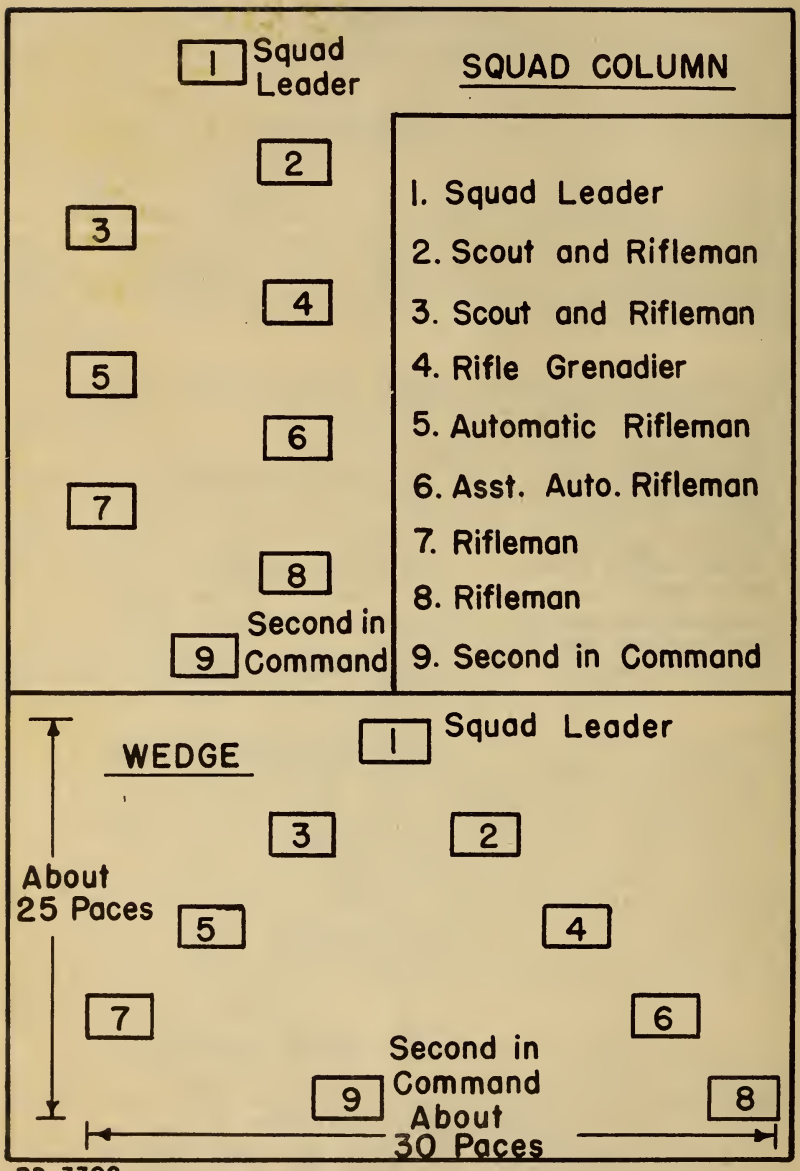
b. During the attack the squad seeks to advance rapidly and with minimum exposure; it does not open fire until fire action is necessary to cover its advance. Advantage is taken of intense bursts of fire by the artillery and infantry supporting weapons to effect rapid bounds from cover to cover. Rifle fire is not ordinarily opened at ranges beyond 400 yards.



DIAGRAMATIC SKETCH

RIFLE SQUAD DEPLOYMENT AS SKIRMISHERS

FIGURE 10



DIAGRAMATIC SKETCH
RIFLE SQUAD IN APPROACH MARCH

FIGURE 11

c. The terrain and the effectiveness of hostile fire determine the method of advance. The squad advances as a unit when hostile fire is sufficiently neutralized; under fire it works forward by individual advances. The squad leader indicates the objective of each advance and issues further instructions under cover in rear of the new position.

d. It must be impressed upon all squad leaders that they can effectively give instructions to their squads only under cover, and that it is very difficult to communicate instructions and insure their execution after the squads have occupied the firing position and come under hostile fire. The firing position is frequently a crest or rise and the cover position the lower ground just behind it.

e. In moving forward from position to position during an advance the squad halts under cover in rear of the new position. The squad leader creeps forward to observe and locate the target and to prepare the fire of the squad. He requires the men to observe the target with a minimum of exposure and gives his preliminary fire orders (sight setting and description of the target) to the squad or makes other arrangements as may be required by the situation. He commands: FIRE POSITION. The squad then crawls to the position from which they can open fire on the target at the leader's signal. The squad leader then completes his fire order.

28. **Advancing the Attack.—a. General.**—At the first firing position on the line of scouts or in rear of it, each attacking unit seeks to gain fire superiority over the enemy to its front. Usually fire will be opened on orders of the platoon leader. However, if the squad is receiving fire when it arrives on the firing line the squad leader may order the opening of fire. Once fire superiority has been gained, it must be maintained. Further advance is made by advancing individuals or by successive rushes of fractions of the troops engaged in the fire fight or by infiltration.

b. **Duties of the squad leader.**—(1) During the fire fight, the primary duty of the squad leader is to apply the fire of his squad to the target. He must enforce fire discipline and control the fire of his squad.

(2) He requires that firing be limited to observed or known targets.

(3) He looks ahead for firing positions which his squad can use as the platoon moves forward.

(4) He must be constantly on the alert to advance his squad to a position nearer the enemy position. He should maintain contact with the platoon headquarters at all times.

(5) He prevents the members of his squad from becoming so widely separated that he loses control.

(6) He must not allow several men to bunch behind cover suitable for only one man. Prominent trees, stumps, bushes or other well-defined objects should be avoided.

(7) During lulls in the fight, the squad leader checks ammunition and has ammunition collected from dead and wounded.

(8) The squad leader himself fires only under unusual circumstances.

(9) In the absence of instructions from the platoon leader, particularly during the last stages of the fire fight, the squad leader may often have to attack important or dangerous targets without orders.

(10) He resists sudden attacks from the flanks by fire.

(11) Should the squad become separated from its platoon, the squad leader makes every effort to locate and join nearby friendly troops. He then places his squad under orders of the leader of the unit he joins.

c. **Position of squad leader.**—The squad leader takes the position from which he can best control his men and observe the effect of their fire. At times due to noise and confusion of battle the leader may have to go to the firing line and move from man to man to give his instructions. In selecting his position considerations should be given the necessity of maintaining contact with platoon headquarters.

d. **Position and duties of assistant squad leader.**—The position of the assistant squad leader is not fixed, he takes position where he can assist the squad leader to best advantage. He will usually assist in enforcing fire discipline, controlling the fire, or maintaining contact with platoon headquarters, instead of firing. He may be required to fire when the squad leader believes the fire is necessary.

29. **Fire Discipline.**—a. Fire discipline in the rifle squad is maintained by careful observance of the instructions relative to the use of the rifle in combat and exact execution of the orders of the squad leader. It requires care in sight setting, aim, trigger squeeze, close attention to the leader, and cessation or change of rate of fire on the squad leader's order or signal. Fire discipline also requires that upon release of fire control by the squad leader to individual skirmishers, each rifleman acts on his own initiative, selects his target, estimates the range, and opens and ceases fire in accordance with the situation.

b. During the fire fight the squad leader's attention is often absorbed in observation of the target. The second-in-command is specially charged with supervision of the squad fire discipline and may be assigned control over a part of the

squad. Designated experienced privates supervise the fire discipline of the two or three men in their immediate vicinity.

30. **Fire Control.**—The platoon leader's attack order indicates the platoon objective. The squad leader selects as the squad target that part of the platoon target area corresponding to the position of his squad in the platoon and issues his fire order. He designates the target, announces the range, and gives the command for opening fire. He controls the fire as long as this is possible in combat. He seeks primarily to concentrate the fire of the squad on the target assigned to his squad, or on the part of the platoon objective corresponding to its position in the platoon; it will, however, fire on other enemy elements of the platoon. When the squad leader can no longer effectively control the fire of the squad, he releases the fire control to the individual men through the command or signal, "At will." Skirmishers transmit orders along the front of the squad by word of mouth, stating the sources of the order. The squad leader participates in the fire of the squad when consistent with his command duties.

31. **Fire Distribution.**—Each rifleman fires his first shot on that portion of the target corresponding generally to his position in the squad. He then distributes his remaining shots to the right and left of his first shot, covering that part of the target on which he can deliver accurate fire without having to change position. The amount of target each rifleman can cover will depend upon the range and the position of the firer. In some cases each rifleman will be able to cover the entire target with accurate fire. Fire is not limited to points known to contain an enemy; on the contrary, riflemen space their shots so that no portion of the target remains unmolested. This method of fire distribution is employed without command. It enables squad leaders to distribute the fire of their units so as to cause the entire target to be kept under fire. If a squad is employing this method of fire distribution and other targets appear, the squad leader announces such changes in the fire distribution as are necessary.

32. **Range.**—Sight setting is based on range estimation. Ranges can be determined more accurately by sighting shots where the strike of bullets can be observed or when tracer ammunition is used. Caution must be observed in the use of tracers, as the point of origin of the fire is thereby revealed.

33. **Target Designation.**—a. The target must be designated with such accuracy as to be unmistakable and by a method so simple as to be understood readily under the conditions of combat. Complicated methods are avoided.

b. When the target cannot be unmistakably pointed out by direct indication, a prominent object in the foreground as near as possible to the target is selected as a reference point. The target is located by extending the arm with

490276 O - 42 - 4

fingers vertical and determining the number of finger breadths covered by the interval between the reference point and the target; example, "Church steeple straight to the front, two fingers left at the fence corner, a machine gun."

34. **Fire Orders.**—a. The detail included in fire orders is dependent upon the time available, the cover, and the character of the target.

(1) If extreme haste is required or the target at close range and unmistakable, fire orders may be limited to the command COMMENCE FIRING.

(2) Detailed fire orders are not practicable when the squad occupies an exposed position. Fire control in such cases must frequently be released to the individual skirmishers.

(3) Wherever practicable, preliminary fire orders are communicated under cover. The target can sometimes be described before the skirmishers occupy the fire position. When the target cannot be easily identified it may be necessary to have the men creep sufficiently close to the crest or other mask to have a view over the foreground and insure recognition. The fire order is completed when the men have signified recognition (signal "ready").

Note: Paragraphs 29 to 34 are more fully discussed under "Technique of Fire" in Subcourse 4.

35. **Fire and Movement.**—a. After the fire fight commences, the squad must carry out its movement in close coordination with its own fire and that of adjacent squads and supporting weapons.

b. The bounds of movement are defined as far as practicable by the terrain features affording cover. On coverless terrain, resort must be had to long bounds. Long bounds require overwhelming superiority of fire. Leaving efficient cover to make a short advance in the open serves only to increase losses without a commensurate gain.

c. Squad advances may take place by rushes of the entire squad, rushes by groups of several men, or by advance of individuals. Rushes under fire are ordinarily resorted to only when moving from cover to cover across short stretches of terrain. Periods of neutralization of hostile resistance by strong concentration of supporting fires favor rushes by larger fractions. Infiltration of individuals along defiladed approaches, where practicable, constitutes the most effective method of advance where marked superiority of fire is lacking.

d. The squad intensifies its fire during periods when any part of it or of an adjacent squad is in movement. It seeks to time its fires in preparation for an advance so as to combine them with the bombardments of artillery or aviation, the fire of supporting weapons, and adjacent units. Dur-

ing periods when no movement is in progress or impending, it reserves its fires and conserves its ammunition and fighting power.

e. The squad leader transmits orders along the squad front by means of signals and personal contact either by himself, through the assistant squad leader, or by designated men.

36. **Support Squad.**—a. Before the attack, the squad leader of a squad in support informs his men of the situation and proposed action of the platoon. He advances his squad in accordance with the orders or signals of the platoon leader or platoon sergeant, keeping it under cover as far as practicable, and preventing it from merging with the assault squads.

b. When directed to reinforce the attacking squads, he points out to his men from cover the positions of the enemy and the attacking squads. He indicates the part of the line to be reinforced and prepares the squad for a rush, extending intervals if necessary.

c. If ordered to envelop a definitely located hostile resistance, the squad leader conducts reconnaissance to locate a departure position for the attack and the best available covered route of approach thereto. He then moves the squad, preceded when necessary by scouts, to the position selected. He endeavors to overwhelm the enemy by opening surprise fire and delivering the assault from an unexpected direction.

37. **Assault.**—The assault is delivered on orders, on signal of the platoon leader, or on the initiative of the squad leader. It is delivered at the earliest moment that promises success and without regard to the progress of adjacent squads. The squad approaches the hostile resistance as close as practicable to the supporting fires, and when the fires are lifted, dashes into the enemy position and charges the defenders with the bayonet. Against an entrenched enemy, the final charge may be preceded by a hand-grenade volley.

38. **Reorganization.**—After a position is taken the squad is immediately reorganized. Casualties among key men, such as the assistant squad leader, the automatic riflemen, and the scouts, are replaced. Ammunition is redistributed. One or two men are placed in observation on the initiative of the squad leader or as directed by the platoon leader to prevent surprise.

39. **Pursuit.**—The squad pursues by fire only, until ordered to do otherwise by the platoon leader.

40. **Security on the March.**—a. General.—During route marches groups are sent to the front, flanks and rear of the column to protect the main body against surprise fire and observation by hostile ground forces. When hostile forces are encountered these groups operate so as to facilitate the

entry into combat of the main body under the most favorable circumstances. The rifle squad may form an element of these protective groups.

b. **Point of an advance guard.**—(1) General.—(a) The infantry point is the name given to the few infantrymen farthest to the front in a column on the march. The squad or half squad may be called upon to act as point. It is sent forward from the next largest unit in rear.

(b) The point is actually a patrol at the front of the entire column. Its purpose is to give warning of the presence of the enemy to the troops in rear, and to engage and drive back small enemy parties.

(2) Formation and conduct.—(a) The formation of the point should be one which will permit control by the squad leader, offer a poor target and facilitate firing quickly to the front or to either flank.

(b) The point confines its activities to the route of march. It does not attempt any patrolling parallel to the route.

(c) The point fires at once on small enemy parties within effective range and when possible drives them back. If outside of effective range, it signals, "Enemy in sight in small numbers," and continues to advance. When large bodies of the enemy are seen, it signals, "Enemy in sight in large numbers," and continues to advance until enemy fire forces it to stop. When unable to drive off the enemy or when forced by fire to stop, the point covers the deployment of the advance party.

(d) Except to open fire, the point stops only when ordered or signaled from the rear to halt.

(3) Connecting files.—(a) Men called connecting files are sent forward from the troops in rear to keep contact with the point.

(b) The connecting files pass forward all orders and messages received from the rear. They halt only on orders or signals from the rear, or when the point halts. They pass back no signals except "Enemy in sight in small numbers," "Enemy in sight in large numbers," and special signals previously agreed upon.

(c) If each connecting file consists of one man instead of two, he looks alternately to the rear and to the front for signals. When the connecting file is two men, one man looks to the rear for signals, the other to the front.

(d) Each connecting file moves so as to be able when looking forward to see the file or group ahead, and when looking to the rear, the file or group to the rear.

c. **Point of a rear guard.**—(1) General.—(a) The rear point or rear guard point is the name given to the few

infantrymen farthest to the rear in a column on the march. The squad or half squad may be called upon to act as rear point.

(b) Front in all cases is the direction of the enemy. When marching away from the enemy, the front is opposite the direction of march. The right flank is always to the right when facing toward the enemy. Thus, in a retirement, the right flank would be on the left-hand side of the column.

(c) The purpose of the rear point is to give the next larger unit warning of the presence of the enemy and to prevent him from delaying the column.

(2) Formation and conduct.—The formation of the rear point is similar to that for a point of an advance guard.

(3) The rear point stops to fire only when the enemy compels it to do so. The enemy's presence is at once reported by signal.

(4) The rear point can expect no assistance from other troops. If the enemy is in large numbers, the other troops may take up a position farther to the rear. In this case, the rear point, when forced back, must withdraw to a flank instead of straight to the rear.

(5) Connecting files.—Connecting files dropped back from the other troops keep contact with the rear point. These connecting files pass forward all orders and signals received from the rear. They halt only on orders or signal from the rear. They pass to the rear no signals except "Enemy in sight in small numbers," "Enemy in sight in large numbers," and special signals previously agreed upon.

41. **Flank Patrol on the March.**—a. A squad or half squad may often be called upon to act as a flank patrol for a unit on the march and moves so as to protect the column from hostile fire within midranges.

b. The leader will be given orders either to go to a definite point and rejoin the column, or to march along a certain route.

c. This kind of patrol is sent out to reconnoiter dangerous places. In conducting the patrol the leader applies the principles and methods of Scouting and Patrolling.

d. When marching beside a unit the patrol moves rapidly from point to point. Positions which might permit good observation by the enemy on and near the route of the patrol are reconnoitered.

The patrol must reach the dangerous points in time to prevent the enemy from firing into the column.

e. Contact with the patrol is the responsibility of the commander of the element sending it out.

f. The enemy is reported by signal. Unless they are moving away from the unit, hostile patrols within effective range are immediately attacked by fire. The presence of large bodies of troops is reported by signal and messenger.

g. If the enemy opens fire either on the patrol or on the column effort is made by the patrol to obtain information of his strength and dispositions. This information is sent at once to the commander of the element which sent out the patrol. While seeking this information the primary mission of the patrol is still to protect the flank of the column and it resists to the last man an enemy attack on the column from the flank.

42. **Security in Combat.**—a. Flank combat patrol.—During a fight, the squad or half squad may be sent to a flank of a unit for the security of that flank. In conducting the patrol the leader applies the principles and methods of Scouting and Patrolling.

The unit may be told to go to a certain place or simply to move out as a flank combat patrol.

If the group is to remain for a time at one locality, the leader requires each man to select two positions, one for firing to the front or flank and one to the flank or rear.

The half squad places one man to observe. The squad usually employs two men. A third man watches for signals from the unit whose flank is being protected. The remainder of the group remains at hand under cover, ready to go immediately to the firing positions which have already been selected and tried out. Positions are selected to provide all around protection.

If the group is not ordered to a definite place, the leader chooses a position or, if the unit from which the group is sent moves forward, a route for it to follow.

The position should be one from which the enemy can be held, or due warning given the friendly troops if he attacks the flank. It may be 100 to 500 yards from the troops. (See Figure 18.)

The patrol will maintain constant communication with the unit from which it was detailed.

b. Connecting group.—A half squad or squad sent to the flank of a company or platoon to keep contact with the unit on that flank, is called a connecting group. When only two men are used they are called a "connecting file."

It should move in such manner that it knows at all times the location of each unit with which it is keeping contact.

If one unit falls behind, the connecting group drops back to maintain contact. In this case, close touch must be kept with the unit from which it was sent.

If contact with the other unit is lost, immediate report of the fact is made by runner to the commander of the unit from which the group was detailed. Unless ordered in, the group remains out to protect the flank. It thus automatically becomes a flank combat patrol.

While contact is being kept the connecting group does not fight except for self-protection or to give warning of a flank attack by the enemy.

SECTION 3

THE BAR SQUAD IN THE ATTACK

43. The BAR Squad, Composition and Armament.—The BAR squad is composed as follows:

Composition:

1 Corporal (squad leader)

1 Private, or Private First Class (second in command)

6 Privates, or Privates First Class, organized into two BAR teams of three men each.

Armament:

2 Automatic Rifles

6 Rifles

The composition of the BAR squad does not change when the rifle squad is increased to 13 men and the integrity of the BAR team is always maintained.

44. General Principles of Employment.—a. In the attack, automatic rifles are usually employed to support the advance of the rifle squads of the platoon or to assist the advance of adjacent units. They are usually employed under platoon control. However, if attachment to rifle squads results in their more effective employment, they may be so attached.

b. The BAR squad usually functions under the general direction of the platoon leader. The guns are usually employed together under the direct control of the squad leader so as to simplify control, facilitate supply, insure the continuity of fire, and increase the density of fire on the target. Frequently, however, the terrain and mission will necessitate the two automatic rifles being employed separately.

45. Mission.—The mission assigned the BAR squad in the attack generally will be one or more of the following:

a. Support by fire the rifle squads of its own platoon.

b. Protect the flanks of the platoon.

c. Cover the reorganization of the platoon.

d. Assist the advance of adjacent platoons by flanking fire.

e. Attachment, in rare cases, to rifle squads.

f. Antiaircraft defense of the platoon.

46. Movement.—a. In the advance in route column the BAR rifle squad marches as part of the rifle platoon. Orders for its formation and location normally will be issued by the platoon commander. The usual formation for the squad is

squad column or squad wedge. A line of skirmishers or infiltration should be used when advancing across ground swept by hostile fire.

b. In the approach march the BAR squad also marches with the platoon. During this phase it is the principal platoon weapon for antiaircraft defense, and orders for its initial formation and location are issued by the platoon commander. The squad usually moves, under the direction of the squad leader, in rear of the center of the leading echelon of the platoon, taking advantage of cover to reach a position where the teams can readily be put into action. When advancing in close proximity to rifle squads, the BAR squad should adopt the formation taken by the rifle squads. Regardless of the formation, the squad leader leads his squad. The squad leader may change the initial formation upon his own initiative to take advantage of cover and to reduce losses.

47. **Fire Positions.**—The position should afford a clear field of fire over the sector assigned the automatic rifle by the squad leader. Whenever practicable, cover should be available in rear of the fire position for the shelter of the automatic rifle team and the weapon when not firing. The fire position of the automatic rifle should, when practicable, be separated from adjacent automatic rifles by a distance of at least 30 yards. Generally these positions will be:

On a flank of the platoon.

In a gap between rifle squads.

Behind an advanced rifle unit permitting flanking fire across the front of an adjacent unit.

Automatic rifles may occupy primary positions or alternate positions. A primary position is one usually occupied by the automatic rifle and its crew and is the one from which it can best accomplish its assigned mission. An alternate position is one used when enemy fire, or the threat of fire, makes it necessary to move the rifle and its crew from the primary position to protect them and keep them in action. Fire from an alternate position must be able to cover the same field of fire as that of the primary position, and should be at least 50 yards from it.

48. **Occupation of Fire Positions.**—Whenever practicable, the automatic rifle team initially occupies the cover position; the automatic rifleman moves to the fire position and observes and selects the target. On the automatic rifleman's order, the assistant automatic rifleman takes position to assist in the service of the piece. The team, (except the automatic rifleman) occupies the cover position at all times when not firing. The automatic rifleman remains in observation.

49. **Fire Direction and Control.**—The platoon leader assigns a general position area and a target or a target area to the squad leader. The squad leader assigns approximate positions

and targets or sectors of fire to the automatic rifle team. Fire sectors are assigned where definite targets cannot be located or the teams are too widely separated for target designation by the squad leader. Where a line target is designated, fire may be distributed between the teams by the designation of a delimiting point in or near the target.

50. The Attack.—a. The automatic rifles constitute a flexible reserve of fire in the hands of the rifle platoon leader. They are put into action when conditions develop especially favoring their employment. Difficulties connected with ammunition supply restrict the use of these weapons to situations where their support is vital to the success of the platoon.

b. The weapons of the BAR squad should rarely be allowed to merge with those of the rifle squads. Each rifle squad has one automatic rifle of its own. The BAR squad is kept under the direct control of the platoon leader whenever possible and is used by him to establish a base of fire for his platoon. After the rifle squads of a platoon have been committed to action, the BAR squad provides the only means the platoon commander has to further influence the course of the action (either to assist the attack or to cover reorganization). Care must be exercised to keep the BAR squad intact and with an adequate supply of ammunition as long as possible, so that it may be used in a decisive direction with surprise effect to insure success or prevent defeat.

c. Situations especially favoring the use of the automatic rifle are offered where an open flank permits the establishment of a base of fire for the support of the movement of the rifle squads. Such a situation may result from the development of the rifle company over a wide front or from the separation of the platoon from contact with adjacent units in the course of battle. When one platoon advances more rapidly than adjacent platoons, gaps in depth occur, making available flanking fields of fire which facilitate the full development of the fire power of the automatic rifles.

d. The squad is preferably put into action on a flank of the platoon. It intensifies its fires when any part of it or any squad of the platoon or adjacent units is in movement. It seeks to time its fires so as to combine them with the bombardments of artillery and aviation, the fires of supporting weapons and adjacent units, and thus contribute to creating the conditions most favorable for the advance of the platoon. During periods when no movement is in progress or impending, it reserves its fires and conserves its ammunition and fighting power.

51. Displacement.—a. After the squad engages in the fire fight, it carries out its movements in close coordination with its own fire and that of the rifle squads and the supporting weapons. Movement is usually effected by team echelons and

by bounds from successive fire positions. Teams execute rushes as a unit, by groups of several men, or by individuals. The automatic rifleman usually leads the rush.

b. When a position no longer affords an effective field of fire and other factors of the situation permit, the squad leader orders a displacement. He designates the order of movement of the teams and when practicable moves forward to reconnoiter the new position area. He locates the approximate fire position for each gun and when practicable a cover position nearby. He then signals or otherwise directs the teams to move to the cover position.

c. Teams commence the rush from the cover position and halt in the new cover position. The automatic rifleman usually leads the rush.

d. In an isolated attack, where the platoon attacks with unsupported flanks, the automatic rifle squad is usually placed well to the flank where it can cover by flanking fire the advance of the platoon to the closest possible distance from the hostile resistance. It moves forward to an advanced position as soon as its fire is masked.

52. **The Assault.**—Against an entrenched enemy, a grenade volley precedes the final rush. The automatic riflemen join the rifle squads of the assaulting echelon, delivering automatic fire at point-blank range.

53. **Reorganization.**—When the attack halts for any reason, the automatic rifle teams should be moved at once to positions from which they can protect the front and flanks of the platoon against counterattacks.

54. **Antiaircraft Fire.**—Whenever practicable, BAR squads assigned to antiaircraft missions are employed as a unit. Where several automatic rifles are employed under common fire control, fire distribution is prearranged; the leading or right airplanes, the next succeeding to the rear or left are assigned to designated teams.

SECTION 4

THE RIFLE PLATOON IN THE ATTACK

ASSAULT PLATOON

55. The Rifle Platoon, Composition and Armament.—The rifle platoon is the largest subdivision of the rifle company. It consists of the following:

Composition:

Platoon Headquarters
Three Rifle Squads
One BAR Squad.

The platoon headquarters consists of:

Platoon Leader (normally a lieutenant)
Platoon Sergeant (second in command)
Sergeant (platoon guide)
4 Privates or Privates First Class (3 messengers and signalmen; 1 supply-ammunition, water, rations)

Armament:

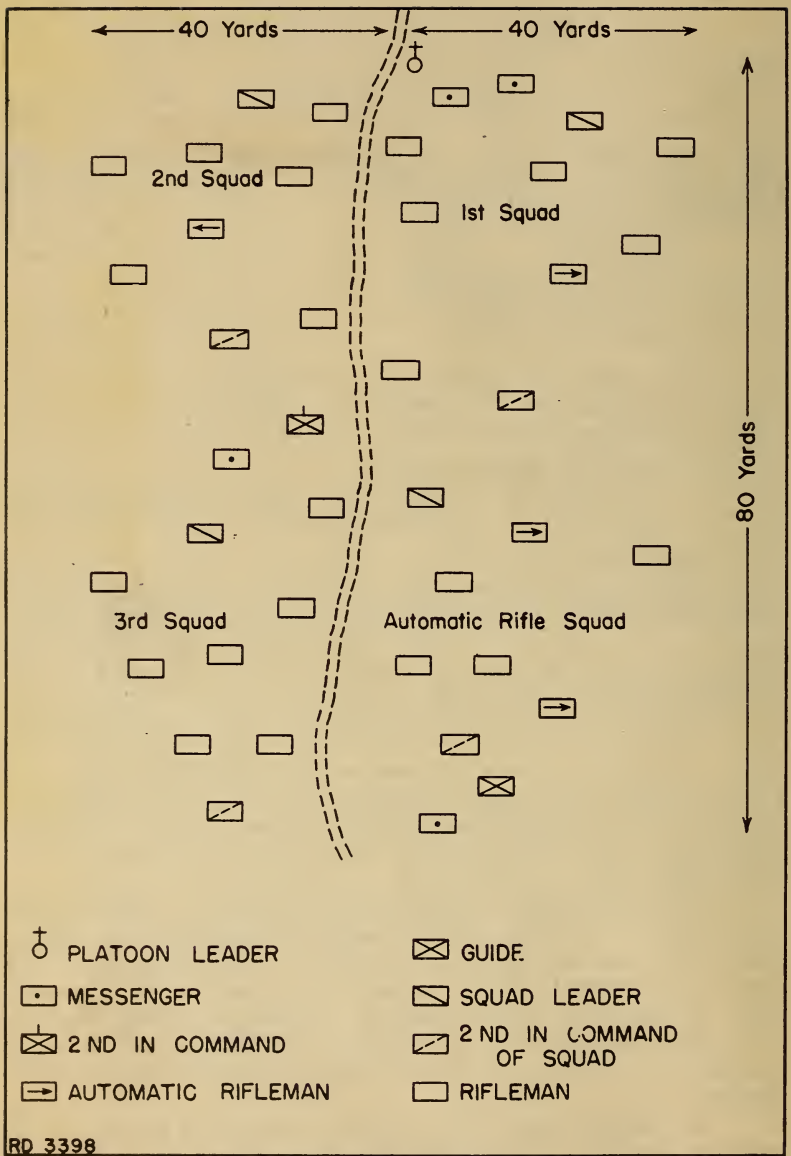
The platoon leader and the platoon sergeant are armed with the carbine. The remaining members of platoon headquarters are armed with the rifle and bayonet. The three rifle squads and the automatic rifle squad are armed as shown in paragraphs 24 and 43.

There is a reserve BAR carried in platoon headquarters.

56. Advance in Route Column.—a. During the advance in route column the platoon leader and all noncommissioned officers with his command strictly enforce march discipline. Straggling is severely checked and men are kept closed up at all times.

b. The normal formation of the platoon, while marching as part of a larger force, is column of threes. The platoon leader marches wherever his presence is required, but is normally at the head of the column. Runners form an extra rank at the head of the platoon. Other file closers form an extra rank at the rear of the platoon. The platoon sergeant marches at the rear of the platoon and enforces march discipline.

c. When attack by hostile aviation is expected, the platoon marches in a formation from which it can readily deploy and open fire on the hostile planes. Such a formation may be: the 1st and 2d squads in squad column on either side of the road, followed by the 3d and BAR squads. With three paces distance between men the platoon will occupy a road space of about 80 yards. Air lookouts would be detailed to each flank. Rifles and automatic rifles are loaded and



DIAGRAMATIC SKETCH
PLATOON ANTIAIRCRAFT DEPLOYMENT
FROM ROUTE COLUMN
FIGURE 12

locked prepared to open fire. When low flying air attack occurs the platoon deploys as shown in Figure 12 and opens fire on the planes.

57. **The Approach March.**—a. Purpose and formations.—Advance in route column is changed into the approach march by the company commander when the fire or nearness of the enemy requires a less vulnerable formation, or when the situation is obscure and the movement of the company is not covered by other friendly forces. The formations used during the approach march will tend to keep losses at a minimum, to permit maximum control by leaders, and to enable the unit to deploy quickly. The initial formation will usually be prescribed for the company at the time of deployment. During the advance, the platoon leader orders changes in formation at will. (See Figures 13 and 14.) Prior to the fire fight the movement of the platoon is regulated on a base squad, the platoon leader assigning to it the direction of advance.

At long range, the best protection for advancing troops against loss is their own movement and the utilization of cover. Cover alone may not diminish losses; the best protection then consists in the most rapid possible advance to a point where the platoon can make effective use of its own weapons.

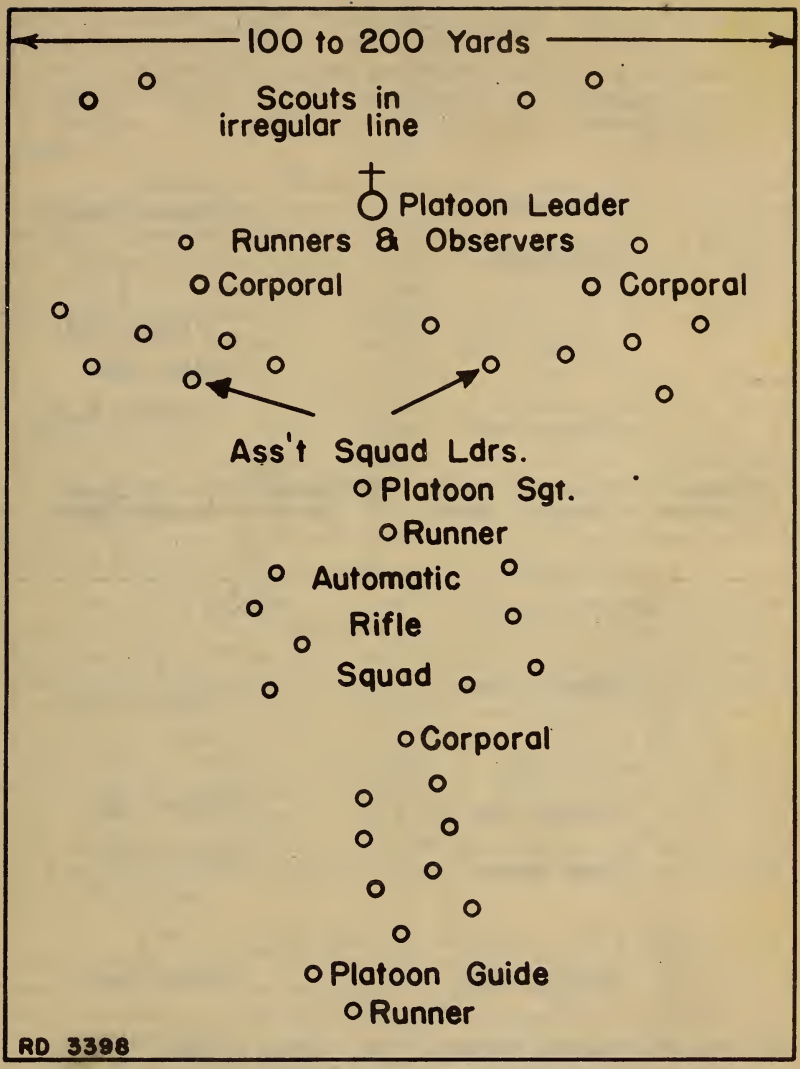
When necessary the platoon crosses an area covered by enemy fire by single or successive lines of men deployed at wide intervals, by bounds from cover to cover, by rushes of small groups, or the platoon leader may direct that squad leaders reform their squads at a certain point or on a certain line. The platoon leader must recover control over his platoon at the designated position before attempting further advance. The designated reforming position must afford cover from fire.

In selecting a formation to meet a particular situation, the platoon leader will consider the relative importance of security, control, vulnerability to enemy fire, and the necessity for the prompt delivery of fire by his unit. The general principle to be followed is that column formations facilitating control will be retained as long as possible and still avoid unnecessary losses.

b. Direction of advance.—The direction of advance is given the platoon leader in orders. The platoon leader may indicate the direction of advance to his platoon by pointing or moving in the desired direction, by magnetic azimuth, by indicating to the leader of the base squad the route to be followed, or any combination of the above. It is not necessary for the platoon to maintain the direction of advance without deviation. The platoon commander, suiting his formations to the terrain and enemy activity, may lead his platoon around dangerous areas and terrain obstacles.

c. Base platoon and rate of advance.—The company commander may designate a base platoon of the company and the unit on which the base platoon is to guide. When a platoon is designated as the base platoon, its leader is responsible for the rate of advance. In general, a uniform rate of advance should be maintained. The platoon halts only on orders from the company commander, or when the unit on which it is guiding halts. A temporary halt to adjust the formation is not considered a halt of the advance.

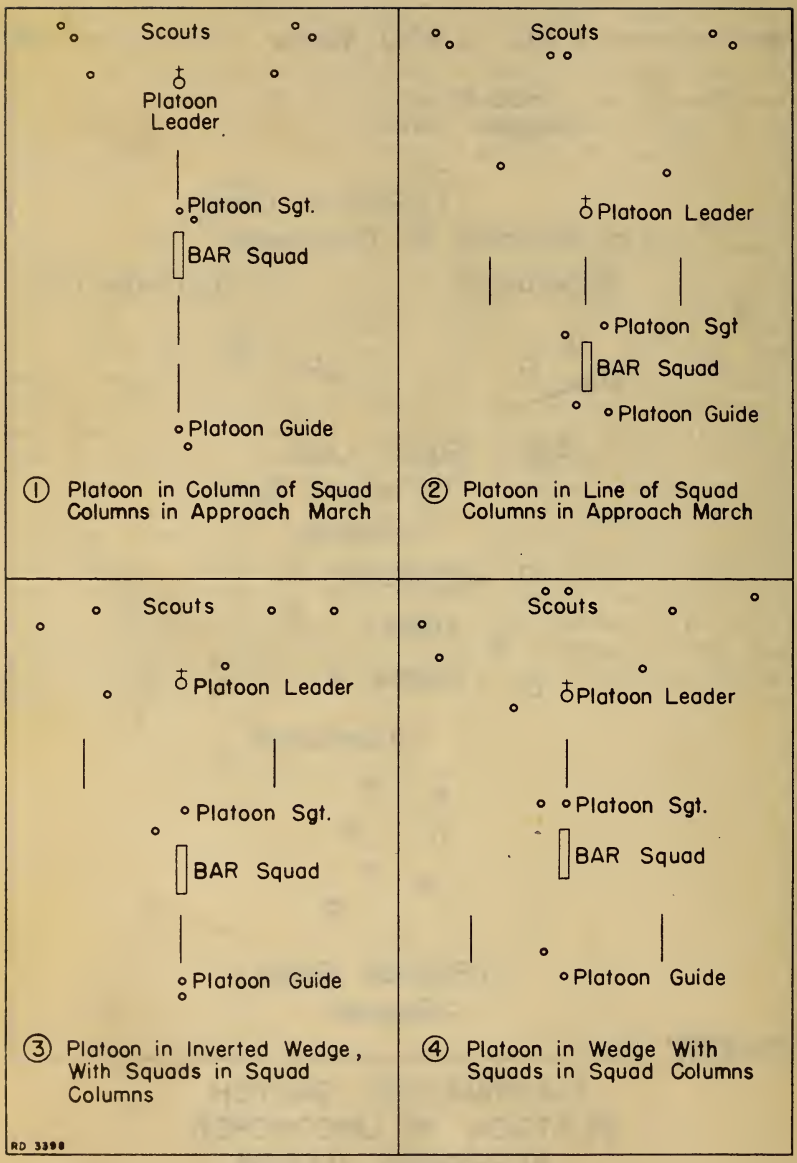
d. In uncovered movement of the platoon, the platoon leader covers his advance by scouts and regulates their movement by the assignment of successive objectives. The scouts precede the platoon by sufficient distance to insure its protection against enemy fire within midrange. When the situation indicates probable contact with enemy elements, the platoon leader holds the platoon under cover and awaits reconnaissance of the assigned objective by the scouts. When they have reached the objective, the platoon leader moves the platoon to the line of the scouts and again sends them forward to the next objective. During the movement of the scouts, he posts himself so as to hold them under observation and maintain control over his platoon. When the platoon must pass through small woods, villages, or defiles, the platoon leader designates the far edge of the woods or the exit of the village or defile as the next objective. The method of advance adopted by the platoon leader varies in accordance with the need for rapidity of movement and security against hostile surprise fire.



DIAGRAMATIC SKETCH
PLATOON IN UNCOVERED
APPROACH MARCH

FIGURE 13

490276 O - 42 - 5



DIAGRAMATIC SKETCHES

PLATOON APPROACH MARCH FORMATIONS

FIGURE 14

e. Use of cover and concealment.—To escape observation, the platoon takes advantage of such cover and concealment as ravines, draws, and woods. Shelled areas, patches of woods which are gassed, prominent points on which enemy artillery is known to have registered, and crests are avoided if possible. The principles of Scouting and Patrolling are applied.

f. Security.—Scouts are sent out from the leading squads on orders from the platoon leader. No more should be used than are necessary to cover the front of the platoon. The platoon follows the scouts at a variable distance in order to reduce the possibility of surprise small-arms fire. Communication between the platoon leader and the scouts is maintained by messenger and by hand signals.

Platoons will usually be close enough to afford mutual flank protection. Should units on a flank move so as to expose the flank of the platoon, a security group may be sent out from the support platoon by the company commander. If this is not done, the platoon leader should protect his flank and maintain contact by designating one or more men to watch the flank, or by sending out a patrol of three or four men as flank protection or as a connecting group.

g. Reconnaissance.—Reconnaissance during an approach must be continuous and rapid. The platoon cannot halt for long periods of time while all supposedly dangerous places are being investigated. The platoon leader, from his position between the line of scouts and his leading squad or squads, reconnoiters continually to the front and flanks. The flank pairs of scouts reconnoiter to their respective flanks. Normally one messenger watches to the front and one flank and another messenger to the front and the other flank. Platoon guides may be used. The prompt advance of all platoons on a general line will usually insure protection against surprise from the flanks.

h. Duties of the platoon sergeant.—The platoon sergeant is the second in command of the platoon. He usually moves behind the center of the leading echelon. He controls the movement of the BAR teams in accordance with the plan of the platoon leader, and supervises and controls the advance of the platoon when the platoon leader absents himself on reconnaissance or on summons from the company commander. He prevents the merging of the squads of the platoon. When the platoon is not the base platoon, he insures conformity of the base squad with the movement of the base platoon.

i. Platoon Guide.—The platoon guide moves in rear of the platoon and keeps in touch with adjacent units. He checks straggling and is responsible that the platoon leader's orders with reference to use of cover, maintenance of quiet and orderly advance, and other disciplinary measures prescribed for the approach are carried out. He quickly informs the

platoon sergeant or platoon leader of any unusual event on the flanks or rear of the platoon which may alter the plan for the approach. During the temporary absence of the platoon leader or platoon sergeant he controls the platoon, or assumes command of the platoon should both of his superiors become casualties.

j. Platoon in assembly area.—The approach march may be interrupted by the occupation of an assembly area preparatory to launching the attack, or the attack may be launched without the occupation of an assembly area. In either event a halt is usually made and time afforded for the issue of extra ammunition. An assembly area, when designated, is usually located in the last available covered position in rear of the line of departure. During the halt in the assembly area the platoon leader disposes his platoon so as to take advantage of available cover and minimize the effects of hostile artillery or airplane attack. Opportunity is here taken to rest the men, issue extra ammunition, reconnoiter, and issue attack orders. Under favorable circumstances the platoon leader should issue a complete attack order to his platoon sergeant, platoon guide, and squad leaders from a point where the terrain over which the platoon is to advance is visible. However, this will often be impracticable. Under unfavorable conditions, orders will have to be issued under cover of darkness, from a map or sketch, or at points where the terrain over which the platoon is to advance is not visible. Often the platoon leaders will receive orders for the attack in fragmentary form consisting of partial orders as the situation develops. In any case the platoon leader will take steps to inform his subordinate leaders of the situation and of his plan of attack as fully as possible.

k. Action of the platoon when fired upon.—When the scouts are fired upon, they take cover, locate the enemy and, if within effective range, return the fire. Usually at ranges beyond 400 yards riflemen open fire only when other available fire support is inadequate. When the ground permits. the platoon must be worked forward under cover until the fire of the enemy forces a return of fire in order for the platoon to advance further.

58. **Advancing the Attack.**—a. When the scouts have been definitely stopped or when it becomes necessary for the platoon to return the enemy's fire in order to continue the advance without excessive losses, the approach march ends and the advance by fire and movement is begun. This is called, "advancing the attack." The platoon leader makes a hasty reconnaissance and formulates his plan for advancing the attack by fire and movement. Where a terrain feature affording cover exists between the line of departure and the objective assigned by the company commander, the platoon leader selects such feature as his first objective. Otherwise, the objective assigned by the company commander is the platoon's first objective.

b. Platoon leader's plans and orders.—Having made an estimate of the situation and arrived at a decision the platoon leader is ready to formulate his plan. It must be simple. It must provide for—

Gaining and maintaining fire superiority, taking full advantage of the fire of supporting weapons.

The intelligent combination of fire and movement.

The method of advancing the attack to be used.

Having formulated his plan, the platoon leader issues orders for putting the plan into effect. If the terrain and enemy fire permit, the platoon sergeant and squad leaders are assembled behind cover from which the objective can be seen. Here the platoon leader issues his orders for engaging the platoon. The order is issued by messenger only when it is inadvisable to assemble the noncommissioned officers.

c. When the platoon attacks with supported flanks, the automatic rifle squad ordinarily follows in rear of the leading echelon at the disposition of the platoon leader until the advance of the platoon reaches close range of the hostile resistance. In moving to its place of employment, it takes advantage of the most favorable route of advance in the platoon zone and may temporarily move through adjacent zones. A rifle squad in support advances as directed by the platoon leader. It is put into action where resistance seems to be weakening, is employed to envelop hostile resistance, or is sent in to fill gaps between the squads of the attacking echelon.

59. Isolated Attack.—a. When a platoon attacks with unsupported flanks the attack is usually prepared by placing the BAR squad well on the flank of the platoon where it constitutes a base of fire to cover the platoon advance to the closest possible distance from the hostile resistance. It moves forward to an advanced position as soon as its fire is masked. In this situation the platoon frequently has an attached 60mm mortar squad which supports its attack. A situation with one or both flanks open may develop in the attack of a continuous hostile position as the result of inequality in the advance of the platoon and adjacent units on its flanks.

b. In the majority of cases the attack of the platoon acting alone (attacking an isolated resistance) involves the reduction of a tactical locality, such as a nest of hostile weapons, a piece of ground affording an advantageous fire position or good observation, a hedge, houses, or other locality of limited dimensions. The platoon leader acquaints himself with the situation by personal reconnaissance before committing the platoon to any line of action. He seeks, first of all, to locate the flanks of the resistance by sending out small patrols (2 or 3 men).

c. The platoon leaders plan habitually includes pinning the enemy to the ground by frontal and flanking fire with a view to immobilizing him and facilitating an envelopment. Elements from the second echelon are brought up on one or both flanks to close with the enemy or give fire support. As far as practicable the movement and fire of frontal and enveloping elements are synchronized so as to concentrate their action against the hostile resistance.

d. The platoon leader observes the development of the enemy fire and location of the main enemy groups. He notes the point where most progress is being made by his attacking echelon with a view to engaging his support squad at the point of least resistance. When opposed by ineffective resistance, he drives his platoon rapidly ahead regardless of the lack of progress on his flanks.

e. The platoon leader uses his automatic rifles whenever practicable to support the advance of the platoon within close range. Where practicable he sends them forward to an advanced position on a flank, from which they can support the movement of the rifle squads to a covered position at the closest possible range from the enemy; or puts them into action against resistances on a flank from positions in rear of his attacking echelon. Except in emergencies, he does not merge the automatic rifles with attacking rifle squads.

f. If it is impossible, on account of flanking fire from other hostile localities situated to the flank or rear, to reduce a tactical point by enveloping action, the platoon leader, under protection of the fire of the platoon and of supporting weapons, seeks to build up an assaulting force at close range to the hostile resistance. In such case the automatic rifles are often best utilized to neutralize the cross fires of the hostile flanking elements.

g. During the attack the platoon sergeant assists the platoon leader in control of the platoon. He usually stays near the squad in second echelon until they are engaged. He directs the movement of the BAR teams until they are ordered into firing position by the platoon leader. When the entire platoon is engaged, the platoon sergeant usually posts himself behind that portion of the attacking echelon most distant from, or most difficult of control by, the platoon leader. From this position he observes the platoon leader and sees that the platoon leader's plan is being carried out.

h. The platoon guide keeps in touch with ammunition expenditures and takes every opportunity to have it replenished. He is especially charged with observing the situation on the flanks and rear. He checks straggling and performs such other duties as may be directed by the platoon leader or the platoon sergeant.

60. Methods of Advancing the Attack by the Platoon.—a. General.—The most important function of the rifle-platoon leader in the attack is to commit his support at the proper time, in the right place, and in a decisive direction. The support of a platoon is the squad or squads which are not committed to the fire fight, and which can still be freely maneuvered.

Under normal, combat conditions, information of the enemy will be extremely limited. It is necessary that the platoon leader secure definite information before he can act with confidence. This information is obtained by continuous reconnaissance as the combat progresses and hence there is a normal sequence of events that we might expect to take place. This sequence is described briefly as (1) find the enemy, (2) fix him by fire, (3) maneuver the support.

The process of "finding," the enemy takes place when contact is made by the scouts. The leading assault element then goes into action and observation of the enemy's fire enables the platoon leader to locate the enemy flanks and gain some knowledge of the enemy strength to his front. So long as the assault element is able to advance it should do so. When, however, the leading element can no longer make progress, then, and not until then, is it time to maneuver the support. At this time the enemy has pinned the leading assault elements to the ground and this unit in turn has, "fixed," the enemy by the fire that it is returning.

The above is not an inflexible rule, but merely a guide. Waiting until the assault is held up permits a determination of enemy strength and dispositions and also effects economy of force, since it is quite possible that it may not be necessary to commit the support. When this is the case, fresh troops are available after the objective is taken to press on a further attack while the original assault echelon is reorganized.

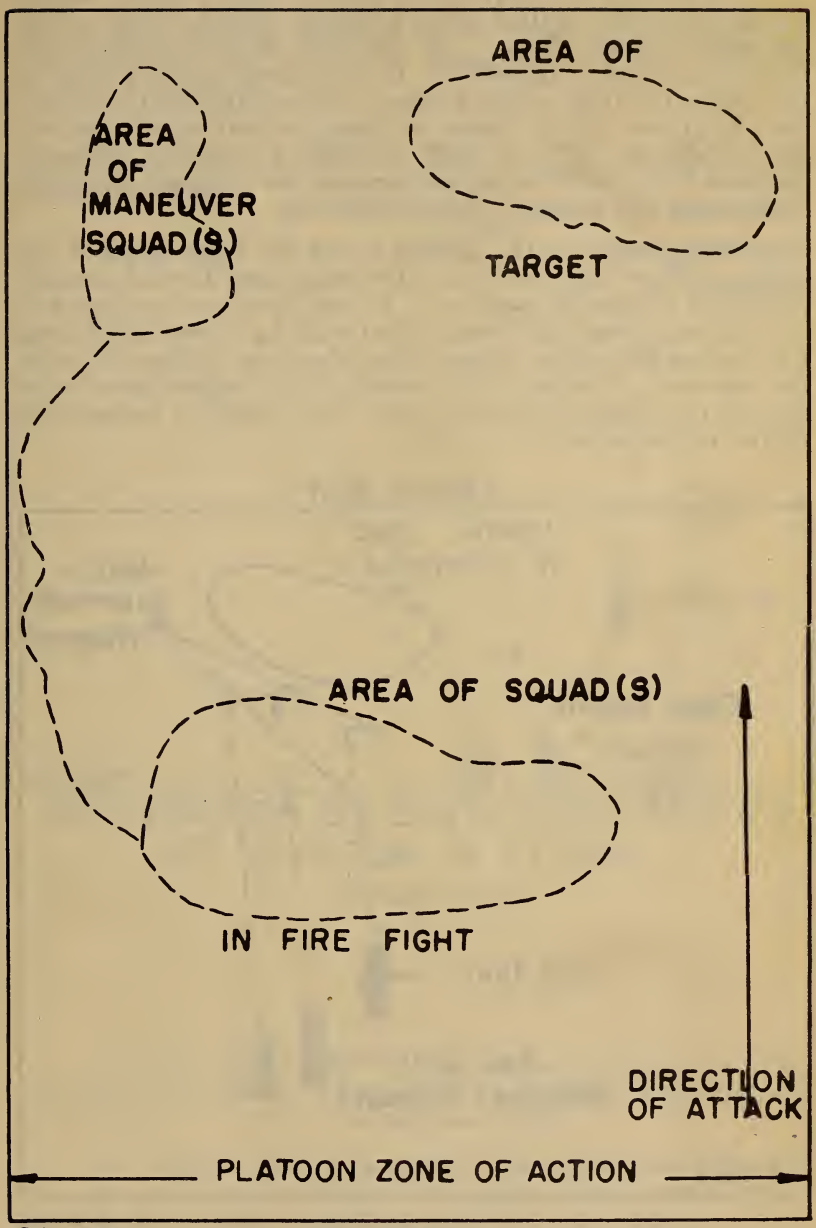
b. The mission, enemy supporting troops, and terrain are the deciding factors which must be considered in determining the method of advancing the attack to be employed to meet any particular situation. The following methods are given as a guide only:

Straight to the front with all squads.—When the attack is over open level ground, or when maneuver room is so limited as to render any other method impracticable, the platoon attacks straight to the front. This is accomplished by initially committing all rifle squads straight to the front, supported by the fire of the BAR squad. The automatic rifle squad is placed on a flank of the platoon as a pivot of fire, in a gap or gaps between rifle squads, or behind the advance rifle squads, in order to fire straight to the front, across the front of its own platoon, or across the front of an adjacent platoon, thus placing its fire against the hostile resistance which most seriously impedes the advance of the platoon.

This method of attack quickly develops the full fire power of the platoon, but has the disadvantage of leaving no force available to the platoon leader for further maneuver.

Straight to the front with one or two squads, while the others work closer under cover.—The ground and character of the resistance will sometimes favor this method. From their nearer position the maneuvering squads, by their fire, cover the advance of the other squads, or under cover of the fire of the latter, close with the enemy. The BAR squad occupies a position so that it can support the advance of the maneuvering unit. The maneuver unit may be only three or four men.

Wide Flanking movements.—The platoon is essentially a driving unit. Wide flanking movements by any part of the platoon are rarely justified. Maneuvering in the zone of an adjacent platoon in advance of that platoon is always dangerous. When such action becomes necessary, a messenger is sent to the headquarters of the adjacent platoon with detailed information of the maneuver. When the platoon is held up, the BAR squad may be sent forward behind adjacent advancing units to deliver flanking fire on a hostile group opposing its platoon.



R.D. 2961

FIGURE 15 -- ROUTE OF SQUAD(S) WORKING TO FLANK OF PLATOON TARGET.

Assisting an adjacent platoon.—The platoon leader should maintain contact with adjacent platoons and be on the alert to assist them. The situation alone can determine the best method of assistance. In some cases it will be best to fire across the front of the adjacent platoon against the resistance holding it up; in others, to launch a flank attack against the resistance. Still another method of assisting adjacent platoons is to continue the advance in the assigned direction and toward the assigned platoon objective.

61. **The Assault.**—The assault is the last brief stage of the attack. When the opportunity presents itself for the assault, it must be grasped immediately. It may be started on orders of the platoon leader; or it may be started by a few individuals who, seeing the enemy is beginning to weaken, charge him with the bayonet. Whenever the assault starts, regardless of who started it, it should at once receive the immediate cooperation of the entire platoon.

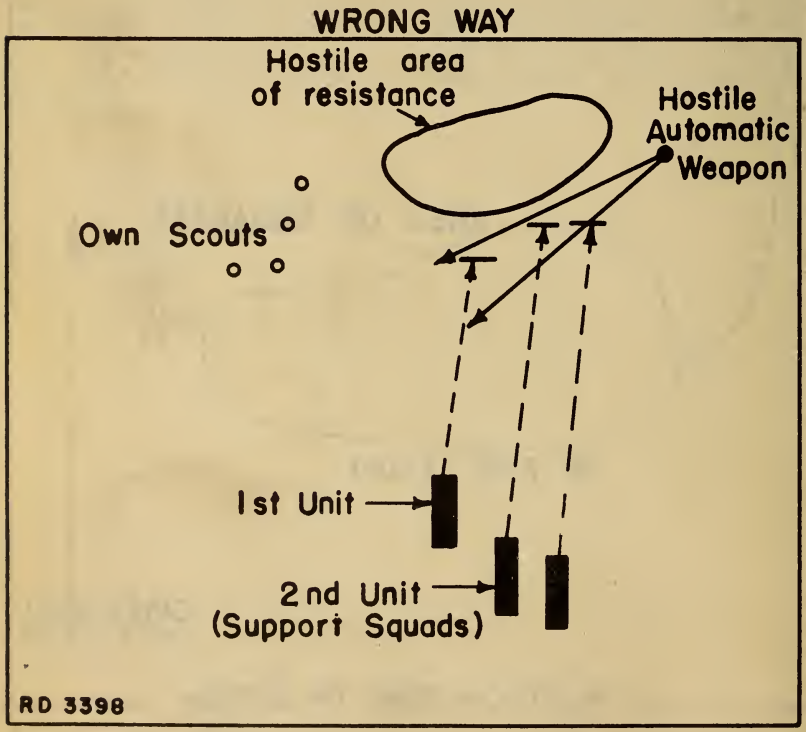
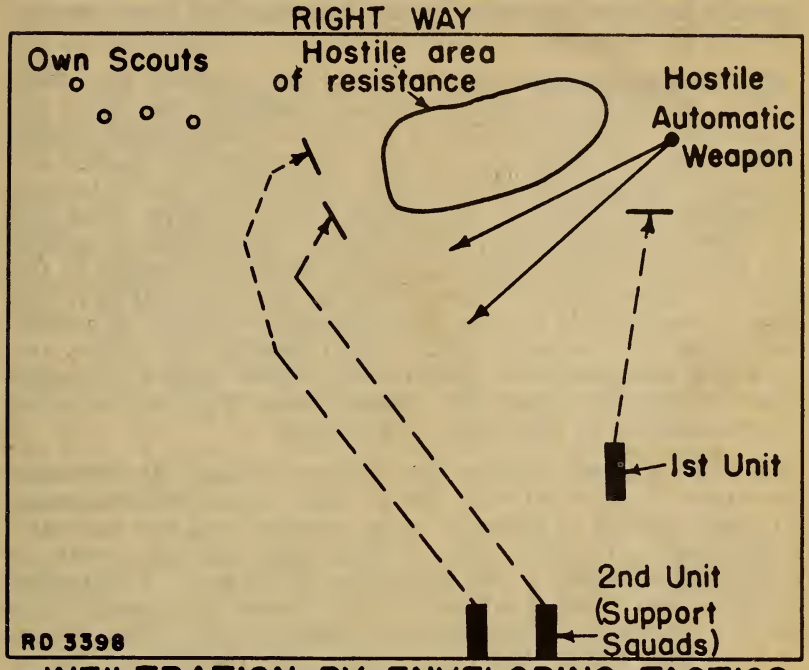


FIGURE 16a

62. **Illustrative Example Enveloping Tactics of a Platoon in Attack.**—a. Figure 16a. **The wrong way.**—The assault platoon has been stopped by hostile resistance. The leading

squad pushes forward. The platoon leader commits the support squads on the same line as the leading squad with no attempt to envelop, no effort to engage the automatic weapon, and using no scouts.



INFILTRATION BY ENVELOPING TACTICS OF PLATOON IN ATTACK

FIGURE 16b

Result.—Mixing of units, confusion in command, little additional pressure on defender and additional casualties due to crowding of men on a dangerous front.

b. Figure 16b. **The right way.**—The assault platoon has been held up by hostile resistance. The leading squad extends in irregular formation avoiding the dangerous front and engaging the automatic weapon. Scouts work around the automatic weapon. The platoon leader after a personal reconnaissance of the situation, envelops the weaker flank of the

area of resistance with the support squads, avoiding the fire of the automatic weapon. Scouts guide and cover the movements.

Result.—The large arc of converging fire is secured and a corresponding divergence of the defender's fire, resulting in greatly increased pressure on the defender and fewer casualties for the attacker.

63. Reorganization.—As soon as the position has been taken, the platoon leader sends out scouts to the front for protection. Squads are placed to meet a counterattack; automatic rifles are sited to cover the reorganization; leaders are replaced; units are regrouped; scouts who have become casualties are replaced; ammunition from nearby dead and wounded is collected and redistributed; a message is sent to the company commander giving the effective strength of the platoon; prisoners are sent to company headquarters; the platoon resumes its advance or prepares for defense in accordance with the company plan. After issuing his orders and directing the platoon sergeant and platoon guides to supervise the reorganization, the platoon leader makes a personal reconnaissance to the front and flanks.

64. The Pursuit.—When the platoon reaches its objective the enemy is pursued with fire as long as he is within range. Further pursuit is taken up only on orders of the company commander. Pursuit, once it has been ordered, must be pushed aggressively to the endurance of the men. Continuous pressure and a rapid advance may prevent the enemy from getting his forces reorganized and under control. The actions of a platoon during the pursuit resemble the actions during the approach march and the attack. Formations must be changed as necessary to facilitate control and rapid advance, and to develop maximum firepower when the enemy resistance stiffens. When an aggressive pursuit is ordered contact with the enemy is maintained by patrols sent out to the front.

65. Security on the March.—The platoon may operate as an assault element of an advance guard operating on a broad front in which case it will operate mainly off roads and will assume an approach march formation, sending forward scouts to protect its movement. The more normal use of the platoon is to form the advance (or rear) party sent out by the support of an advance (or rear) guard.

66. The Platoon as an Advance Party.—a. General.—When the platoon is employed as an advance party it is sent forward from the support. The mission of the advance party is to provide for the security of the support.

The advance party, in turn, sends forward a point. The point for a platoon as advance party is usually a half squad; however, a full squad may be employed.

b. Formation and distance.—The formation of the advance party is column of twos; a column of files on each side of the road.

The advance party commander usually marches at the head of the advance party or between the point and the advance party. He goes, however, where he can best observe the ground and if resistance is met, can direct the action to be taken.

He is responsible for the route of march when advancing in route column, and for the assigned direction in an approach march.

The commander of an advance party states in his orders the distance at which the point will precede the advance party. In open country with a platoon as advance party this will usually be not less than 150 or more than 250 yards. In wooded country or at night the distances will be considerably less than the minimum indicated.

The distance between the advance party and the support will be determined by the support commander. The support usually follows the advance party at the distance stated. In this case the advance party commander is responsible for the rate of march. Both the support and the advance party send forward connecting files to maintain contact with the next advanced unit.

c. Patrolling.—Extensive patrolling by an advance party the size of a platoon will be rare. It may be called upon to furnish one or two small patrols. If the support commander does not state in his orders what patrolling is to be done by the advance party, this information must be asked for.

Motorized detachments to the front cannot take over the duties of the advance party, which must patrol as though there were no protection ahead.

It must be remembered that patrols which are sent more than 200 yards from the advance party will not, in most cases, be able to rejoin it until the march is completed. If necessary patrolling reduces the strength of the advance party unduly it should be reinforced.

d. Action of advance party when resistance is met.—Any resistance which the point is unable to overcome is taken care of by the advance party. The advance party attacks at once without hesitation or special reconnaissance unless orders are received to the contrary. Every effort is made to clear the way quickly for the remainder of the column. When the resistance has been overcome, the march is quickly resumed.

67. The Platoon as a Rear Party.—a. General.—A platoon may be employed as a rear party sent back by the rear guard support. The mission of the rear party is to provide

for the security of the rear guard support. By checking the advance of the enemy and beating off his patrols it facilitates the march of the rear guard support.

The rear party, in turn, sends back a rear point. The rear point for a platoon as a rear party is usually half a squad; however, a full squad may be employed.

b. Formation and distance.—The formation of the rear party is column of twos, one file on each side of the road.

The rear party commander usually marches behind the rear party. From this position he can quickly decide what to do if the rear point is fired on.

The commander of the rear party states in his orders the distance at which the rear point is to follow the rear party. This distance will rarely be greater than 400 yards. In close country the distance is less than in open country.

The distance between the rear party and the rear guard support will be determined by the support commander. Usually the rear party will be directed to follow the support at from 100 to 500 yards. Both the support and rear party drop back necessary connecting files to maintain contact with the unit next in rear.

c. Patrolling.—Patrolling to the flanks by a rear party of this size will be rare. Such patrolling as is performed will be confined generally to distances not exceeding 200 yards. The patrol must be able to rejoin the rear party. Rear guard patrols will usually be sent from the support and will rejoin the rear party.

d. Action of rear party when attacked.—When the rear point is fired on, the rear party commander must decide upon a plan of action.

If the rear party commander decides that it is necessary to fight, he ordinarily selects a firing position well to the rear of that taken by the rear point. He sends a runner to the leader of the rear point to tell him where the position is and to lead the rear point back in its withdrawal.

The rear point is reinforced when it occupies the only available firing position. This will be most unusual.

The position taken by the rear party should give, if possible, a good field of fire up to 800 or 1,000 yards and afford cover for the rear party to use in disengaging itself.

As soon as the enemy appears, he is fired on. When he is within 400 or 500 yards, the rear party commander leaves a group of three or four men in position to cover the withdrawal. This group may later follow as rear point.

Any plan is suitable which secures the support and, with few losses to the rear party, delays the enemy.

The rear party can expect no assistance from the support. The support commander must be kept informed of the situation by signal or runner. If the support takes up a position, the rear party in withdrawing moves to a flank of the support.

68. The Platoon as a Flank Guard.—a. Troops on the march provide for flank protection by numerous means, among which are flank guards. The network of existing roads is seldom such that units as small as a platoon will find a parallel road within supporting distance of its main body upon which to march. Under such conditions, flank protection is obtained by sending the platoon to occupy a position on the flank until the main body has passed. The platoon then joins the tail of the column.

b. A platoon acting as a flank guard, in case a parallel road is available, usually marches in columns of twos, one file on each side of the road. It sends forward three or four men from 100 to 300 yards. Two men follow in rear as rear point. Protection on its exposed flank is obtained by sending small patrols of two or three men to points along the route from which they can guard against surprise.

c. The position of the platoon as a flank guard on a parallel road or from a fixed position must be such, with respect to the main body which sent it out, as will prevent the enemy from avoiding the flank guard and attacking the main body.

d. The flank guard commander usually marches at the head of his column, but is free to move to any position where he can observe what is going on and direct necessary action to meet the situation.

e. If the commander sending out the flank guard does not state which unit is responsible for contact, this information is asked for. In the absence of orders the flank guard commander keeps contact. Contact between the flank guard and main column is kept by two-men patrols. At intervals on the march these patrols go to high points from which the main column can be seen. They serve to reconnoiter the ground which they visit and to keep the flank guard commander informed of the location of the main column.

f. Small groups of the enemy are attacked at once. When the resistance cannot be dealt with by the platoon alone, the commander therefore informs the commander of the body which sent him out. The flank guard holds off the enemy until the main column is safely by and then disengages itself from the fight and rejoins the main column.

g. An attack in force is resisted to the last man.

69. Security in Combat.—The platoon acting as a flank security group conforms, in general, to the principles governing the employment of a squad as a flank combat patrol. The

platoon leader will be told to go to a certain place, or simply move out as a flank combat patrol. On the march, the leader sends a point of four men 50 to 200 yards to his front. He protects his flanks, if necessary, by small patrols of two or more men. When the platoon halts, observers are placed to watch the front, flanks, and rear. They should be in pairs. The remainder of the platoon is held under cover ready to resist in any direction. The platoon leader and guides study the ground constantly. The platoon will maintain communication with the group being protected. (See Figure 18.)

SUPPORT PLATOON

70. Missions.—a. The rifle company may be deployed for the attack with one or two platoons in the assault echelon and with two platoons or one platoon in support. The support echelon constitutes the maneuvering force at the disposal of the company commander. The usual missions that will be given to a platoon in the support echelon are:

To envelop points of resistance developed by the assault echelon.

To reinforce the assault echelon.

To occupy gaps in the line.

To furnish security to the flanks.

To furnish protection against counterattacks during the reorganization of the assault echelon.

To relieve a platoon of the assault echelon.

To mop up a position taken and passed by the assault echelon.

To assist progress of adjacent units.

71. Formations.—The formations used by a support platoon are governed by the same principles as those of an assault platoon.

72. Movements.—a. During the approach march a support platoon normally will be directed to follow the assault echelon at distances varying from 100 to 400 yards. Within these distances the platoon marches in such formations as will minimize losses. The platoon moves by bounds from cover to cover, keeping far enough from the assault echelon that fire directed at it will not pin the platoon to the ground, but not so far to the rear that it will be out of supporting distance of the assault echelon. Scouts are sent out ahead to keep contact with the assault echelon and to keep the platoon commander informed of the situation. When the assault echelon is engaged, a support platoon leader holds his unit in readiness and engages it only upon orders from the company commander, except under unusual circumstances demanding immediate action, such as a surprise attack on the assault echelon from the flank.

b. A support platoon usually leaves cover only after the leading echelon has left the cover ahead. The platoon leader holds firm control over his unit and takes action to prevent its merger with the leading echelon.

73. Reconnaissance.—During the advance the commander of a support platoon constantly studies the ground to his front and flanks, and plans the formations and methods he will use in the event he receives orders from his company commander for the employment of his platoon. When the assault echelon is held up he supplements his personal reconnaissance by sending to the flanks reconnaissance patrols of two or three men each to locate possible avenues of advance. These patrols make their reconnaissance and are then available as guides for movements of the platoon, or elements thereof, over the ground which they have covered.

74. Flank Protection.—A support platoon is charged with its own flank protection, and usually is directed to protect the flank or flanks of the assault echelon either by sending out flank patrols, or by the occupation of positions from which it can fire or maneuver to the flank.

75. Antiaircraft Protection.—It is the special duty of the support platoon to provide antiaircraft protection for the company. It places its BAR squad in position for antiaircraft fire at every halt.

490276 O - 42 - 6

SECTION 5

WEAPONS PLATOON, RIFLE COMPANY, IN THE ATTACK

GENERAL

76. The Weapons Platoon, Rifle Company, Composition and Armament.—a. The weapons platoon, rifle company is composed of the following units:

Platoon Headquarters:
- 1 Lieutenant, platoon leader.
- 1 Gunnery Sergeant, second in command.
- 2 Messengers and Signalmen.

Mortar Section:
- 1 Sergeant, chief of section.
- 2 Mortar Squads, each squad containing:
  - 1 Corporal, squad leader
  - 4 Privates or PFCs, gunners and supply.

Light Machine Gun Section:
- 1 Sergeant, chief of section.
- 2 Light Machine Gun Squads, each squad containing:
  - 1 Corporal, squad leader
  - 3 Privates or PFCs, gunners and supply.

b. The platoon is armed as follows:

Platoon Headquarters:
- 2 Carbines, Cal. .30
- 2 Rifles, Cal. .30

Mortar Section:
- 2 Mortars, 60mm, (one per mortar squad)
- 2 Thompson Submachine Guns (squad leaders)
- 3 Carbines, Cal. .30
- 6 Rifles, cal. .30

Light Machine-Gun Section:
- 2 Light Machine-Guns, Cal. .30, air cooled (one per machine gun squad)
- 2 Thompson Submachine Guns, one per machine-gun squad.
- 5 Carbines, Cal. .30
- 6 Rifles, Cal. .30

c. Noncommissioned officers of the platoon are trained to take charge of either a mortar or light machine-gun section and conduct its movement and fire in cases of emergency.

77. **Duties of Personnel of Command Group.**—a. Platoon Leader.—The platoon leader leads the platoon as a unit during route and approach march. During combat he takes personal charge of the mortar section. He must be prepared at all times;—to make recommendations to the company commander for the employment of the weapons of the platoon to support the company plan of action; to issue orders for the employment of the weapons of the platoon; to supervise the fire of all elements of the platoon which are functioning under his direct control; and to supply all elements of the platoon except those attached to rifle platoons. He must keep himself informed at all times of the locations of the company command post, the elements of his platoon, and the assault rifle platoons of his company.

b. Platoon Sergeant.—The platoon sergeant, second in command, assists the platoon leader in the control of the platoon during route and approach march. When directed, he joins the company commander and acts as agent for the platoon leader.

c. One messenger accompanies the platoon leader and one reports to the company commander when the company develops for the approach march.

78. **Route March.**—In route march, the platoon marches as prescribed for a rifle platoon under command of the platoon leader. Its place in the column is designated by the company commander. It is usually assigned a position following the rearmost rifle platoon. It forms the fourth platoon of each rifle company.

79. **Approach March.**—a. Method of Movement.—The development order of the company commander prescribes the method of movement during the approach; whether the platoon will march assembled as a unit, distributed to rifle platoons, or to echelons of the company for the execution of tactical missions. If the platoon is to march assembled the order should state its initial location, march objective, and direction of advance. If it is to march distributed for the execution of tactical missions it should state the missions of light machine-gun and mortar sections, the attachment of squads or sections to rifle platoons or their place in the several company echelons, and the missions of each unit.

b. Covered Approach.—The platoon usually advances assembled in the rear echelon of the company. The platoon leader assigns the direction of advance and designates a base section. When he desires to control the advance personally, he orders the base section, "Follow me." The platoon advances with sections disposed in a manner best adapted to the terrain to be crossed. The platoon leader orders the initial distribution and studies the terrain with a view to advancing the platoon by routes least exposed to observation by the

enemy and to maintaining control during the advance. He must seek to determine at all times what areas are visible from enemy terrain. The platoon may be formed in one or two echelons with sections abreast or in successive echelons. Distribution with sections abreast is generally best adapted to rapid movement over open terrain. Distribution in depth is indicated when it is desired to take advantage of covered routes of advance or to avoid obstacles. Dispositions are varied in accordance with the terrain and the situation. The platoon leader or, in his absence, the platoon sergeant, accompanied by the command group, precedes the platoon along the route of march. He seeks to screen his unit from hostile observation, move it so as to evade or minimize hostile fire effect, and retain the greatest degree of control over all platoon elements.

Movement takes place in a series of bounds. The platoon is assigned an initial movement objective by the company commander, and the platoon leader designates the platoon objective to the leader of the base section. This objective is not necessarily that designated by the company commander but may be an intermediate terrain feature. The platoon leader normally precedes the platoon by a distance sufficiently great for effective reconnaissance. During the absence of the platoon leader on reconnaissance, the platoon sergeant maintains contact with him by sight or a connecting file.

c. Uncovered Approach.—In the uncovered approach march of the company, where two rifle platoons of the company are in the leading echelon, it is usually advisable to attach a mortar squad to each platoon and march the remainder of the platoon near the rear of the interval between the two platoons. Where, exceptionally, only one rifle platoon is employed in the leading echelon, all elements of the weapons platoon not attached to rifle platoons may march as prescribed for the covered approach. A mortar squad may be attached to the leading platoon.

d. Reconnaissance.—When action appears imminent, the platoon leader moves with the company command group and executes such reconnaissance as may be directed by the company commander or as may be indicated by the situation. He reconnoiters the zone of advance and the terrain feature designated by the company commander as the objective of movement. He conducts reconnaissance with a view to the possible employment of the mortars and light machine guns in case the company commander should order an assembly for action on the objective. His reconnaissance bears especially on:—

The situation on the flanks favoring the employment of the light machine guns.

Firing positions from which the missions of the mortars and light machine guns can be best accomplished.

Any terrain in front of the rifle platoons masking their observation and fire.

For the light machine guns, cover positions for occupancy by men and weapons while awaiting orders to move into firing positions.

80. **Tactical Employment.**—a. Control.—The weapons platoon functions under the control of the company commander in order to provide close fire support for the rifle platoons. The characteristics and methods of employment of the mortars differ so widely from those of the light machine guns that the two sections will usually be separated in position and in mission. When direct control of the action of the platoon as a single unit becomes impracticable, the platoon leader supervises the fire of the 60mm mortars, and the company commander that of the light machine guns.

b. Attachment.—Attachment of an element of the weapons platoon to a rifle company in attack occurs only when suitable firing positions, from which close support under company control is possible, cannot be found; when a rifle platoon is operating through dense woods; or when a rifle platoon, detached from the company, attacks with unsupported flanks, or operates on a semi-independent mission. The rifle platoon leader then assumes entire control of the attached element and is responsible for all of its activities, including supply.

81. **Orders.**—The scope of the platoon leader's orders will vary widely in different situations. They invariably follow the five paragraph form and should include as many of the following items as are applicable and necessary for the intelligent functioning of subordinates:

Information of the enemy and of our own troops, including the positions and missions of the machine guns and mortars of the battalion heavy weapons company.

What the platoon is going to do, mentioning attachments, if any, to rifle platoons.

Missions of the elements of the platoon to include: initial positions, initial targets or sectors of fire, time of opening fire, and subsequent action.

Instructions concerning supply of ammunition and other administrative instructions.

Locations of platoon leader and company commander.

THE LIGHT MACHINE-GUN SQUAD AND SECTION

82. **General Principles of Employment.**—a. In the attack the light machine guns are usually employed under company control to support the advance of rifle platoons of the company or assist the advance of adjacent units. They may be employed, in conjunction with other units, to support an attack by fire, or maneuvered to positions in rear of advanced units from

which they may deliver flanking fire on enemy groups holding up the advance of rifle units.

b. In the attack, light machine guns are rarely attached to subordinate units of the company. However, if due to close terrain, attachment to platoons results in their more effective employment, they may be attached.

NOTE: A unit is said to be "attached" to a larger unit when it comes under the direct orders of the commander of the larger unit. The commander of the larger unit is then responsible for the proper employment of the attached unit in battle.

c. When the situation and the terrain permit, the two light machine-gun squads of the section should be employed together under direct control of the section leader. This employment facilitates control, ammunition supply, and the advance to new positions. Frequently, however, the terrain and mission will necessitate the two squads of the section being employed separately.

d. Local protection for light machine-gun crews must be provided by riflemen.

83. **Missions.**—a. The mission assigned the light machine-gun section in the attack generally will be one or more of the following:

Support by fire, rifle units of its own company or adjacent companies.

Protect the flanks of the company.

Cover the reorganization of the company.

b. When the company organizes a base of fire, the light machine-gun section is assigned a sector of fire or target or targets and an initial position area; or it is assigned positions from which it will prepare to advance with the attacking echelon. Where tanks lead an attack, the section is assigned a sector of fire and an emplacement in accordance with the battalion plan of supporting fires.

84. **The Advance in Route Column.**—In the advance in route column the light machine-gun section marches under the control of the weapons platoon leader. Orders for its formation and location usually will be issued by that officer. The section leader is responsible for the march discipline of his section.

85. **The Approach March.**—a. In the approach march the section usually marches under the control of the weapons platoon leader. The mortar and machine-gun sections may march together or the officer commanding them may give each a different route. That officer usually will issue orders for the initial formation of the section and its location within the rifle company. The section leader may change the initial formation upon his own initiative to take advantage of cover and to reduce losses.

b. The formation taken by the section should be that best suited to the conditions under which the advance is being made. When under enemy observation, the formation adopted by the section should conform to the formation of nearby rifle units.

c. Section column is the most convenient formation. The section leader may precede his section (10 to 50 yards) to select the best route. This formation permits good control and has the advantage of requiring only one route to be reconnoitered.

d. Line of squads gives the required interval to minimize the effect of shell fire without the depth or elongation resulting from column formation. The section leader leads his section. Both squads are under his immediate control. The section should cross short stretches of open country which are under enemy observation and subject to artillery or long-range machine-gun fire at a rapid rate and in line of squads. This formation is better than section column, because in section column the leading squad will probably draw fire. The usual formation for the squad is squad column.

e. A formation with echeloned squad columns combines deployment in both width and depth. This formation is useful on open ground where only scattered cover exists, and for a unit marching on an exposed flank. It permits fire to be delivered promptly in any direction.

f. In crossing areas swept by small-arms fire the section should adopt a line formation or advance by infiltration.

86. **Positions.**—a. Light machine guns act by fire alone. They must seek positions enabling them to perform their fire missions. Generally these positions will be:

On a flank of a rifle unit.

In a gap between rifle units.

Behind an advanced rifle unit permitting flanking fire across the front of an adjacent unit.

From high ground close in rear of a rifle unit permitting overhead fire.

b. The light machine guns may occupy primary positions or alternate positions.

A primary gun position is one usually occupied by the gun and its crew and is the one from which it can best accomplish its assigned mission. An alternate gun position is one used when enemy fire, or the threat of fire, makes it necessary to move the gun and its crew from the primary position to protect them and keep them in action. Fire from an alternate position must be able to cover the same target or sector of fire as fire from the primary position. An alternate position should be at least 50 yards from the primary gun position.

The mission assigned the section governs the selection of gun positions. Other factors in the selection of gun positions are:

The field of fire.

Safety for guns and personnel (protection from hostile fire; cover and concealment).

Time available.

The routes of approach for the occupation of the position for supply.

87. **Orders.**—a. Orders for the occupation of the initial firing position will be issued to the section leader by the weapons platoon leader or by higher authority if the section is operating alone.

b. The section leader should precede his section to a point designated by the weapons platoon leader or higher authority, to receive his orders. He should arrive sufficiently ahead of his section so that he may receive the order for the employment of the section and reconnoiter for and select gun positions before the squad leaders arrive to receive their orders.

c. Responsibility for the control and conduct of the light machine-gun section, after he receives his orders for the attack and moves to his position area, will rest largely with the section leader. The different characteristics of the mortar and light machine gun frequently will result in the two sections being separated by a distance greater than can be effectively controlled by a single leader. The section leader will be called upon to exercise initiative, aggressiveness, and good judgment in selecting his positions, displacing forward, and conducting his section through the fire fight.

d. When the squad leaders arrive, the section leader issues the section order. This should include information of the enemy and of friendly troops, the mission of the section, the mission of each squad, the general areas to be occupied by each squad, any restrictions on the opening or conduct of fire, administrative details if known, and the location of platoon and company command posts. It will be exceptional to have the section leader issue a fire order to the gunners of the section.

88. **Occupation of Positions.**—a. Upon receipt of the section leader's order, the squad leader conducts his squad to the area to be occupied, selects the exact position for his gun, and directs and supervises the mounting of the gun. When the gun is in position he issues his fire orders.

b. Every effort must be made to occupy the gun positions without being seen by the enemy. If a gun position is exposed and cannot be so occupied, then the position should

be entered boldly and with utmost speed. In this case the squad must depend upon its speed in going into action and opening fire to give it protection.

89. **Conduct of Fire.**—a. The section may be assigned a definite target, in which case the section leader determines the method of engaging it by the fire of the squads.

b. The section may be assigned a sector of fire, in which case the section leader may divide the sector giving a part to each squad and directing squad leaders to engage such targets as appear in their sector; or he may engage targets in the entire sector by the fire of both squads as he sees fit.

c. The squad is the usual fire unit. The section leader directs the fire of the section; the squad leader controls the fire of his squad. On large and important targets the section leader may require both squads to open fire simultaneously at his signal. Unless speed in getting the guns into action is the most important consideration it is best not to open fire until all guns are in position.

d. Targets which can be engaged effectively by rifle fire should not be engaged by the light machine gun unless the need for its fire is clearly apparent.

90. **Communication.**—The section leader maintains communication with the squads of his section by using a messenger, by voice, and by arm and hand signals. When practicable, the section leader takes a position from which he may be seen from both squads or at least from the one having the most important mission. Communication within the squad is by voice and arm and hand signals. When operating as part of the section the squad leader should place himself so that he can see both the target and the section leader.

91. **Advance to Subsequent Positions.**—a. The section may move forward as a unit or it may advance one squad at a time. When advancing by squads, the section leader, followed by a squad, goes forward to select the new position. The other squad remains in position covering the advance of the leading squad. The section leader prescribes the time the rear squad displaces forward or he may signal it forward.

b. The squad, when acting alone, advances to new positions when the progress of the attack makes it impossible to continue firing on the assigned mission or sector from the old position. Forward displacement must be made aggressively, the squad frequently moving close behind or on the flank of the assault echelon of the rifle platoons.

c. The movement forward should be made with due regard to the use of cover and concealment. Defiladed routes are sought. Formations similar to those taken by nearby rifle units are adopted.

92. **Reorganization or Consolidation of Positions.**—When the attack halts for any reason the light machine guns should be moved at once to positions from which they can cover the front and flanks of the rifle units against counterattacks. Great reliance is placed on the light machine guns to hold off the enemy while the reorganization is going on or while the position is being prepared for defense.

93. **Ammunition Supply.**—a. When the section is operating under the command of the weapons platoon leader, that officer, under the supervision of the rifle company commander, is responsible for the supply of the section from the time the ammunition is received in the company area.

b. When the section is attached to another unit the section leader, under the supervision of the commander of the unit to which the section is attached, is responsible for the supply of the section.

c. When the squad is attached to another unit the squad leader, under the supervision of the commander of the unit to which the squad is attached, is responsible for the supply of the squad.

d. The section leader should exercise strict supervision over the expenditure of ammunition.

THE 60mm MORTAR SQUAD AND SECTION

94. **General Principles of Employment.**—The light mortars are used to neutralize targets which the assaulting platoons are unable to reduce by their own fire and which cannot be dealt with effectively by other supporting weapons. Because of the high trajectory of its fire, which enables it to render effective support to the advancing riflemen when other supporting weapons must cease firing because of safety requirements, the 60mm mortars are particularly effective in the final stages of the attack. They are employed under the general control of the company commander.

95. **Duties of Leaders.**—The duties of leaders of the 60mm mortar section are essentially those prescribed for the leaders of the 81mm mortar section. However, the closer proximity of the light mortars to the front line in attack usually permits observation of fire near the pieces and makes unnecessary and impracticable fire control from a section observation post. The principal duty of the section leader is to observe closely the rifle troops and regulate the movement and positions of the mortar squads in accordance with the action and changing situation of the rifle elements. Where the company establishes a base of fire, the section or platoon leader gives the command or signal for opening fire on a target and specifies the number of rounds for each mission. Prior to displacement, a sector of fire or target area is assigned to each squad;

the squad leaders take as primary targets those included in their assigned target areas or sectors, and as secondary targets those appearing outside their sectors or target areas. They regulate their fires in accordance with the situation and the needs of the attacking echelon.

96. **Mission.**—The mission of the 60mm mortar section is to give close support to the rifle platoons of the company at the critical stages of the attack. They are the most effective supporting weapons in the hands of the company commander, who uses them to neutralize targets which cannot be disposed of by the fire of rifles and light machine guns, or of the weapons of the heavy weapons company. Due to the weight of the ammunition and the necessity of moving it by hand, ammunition supply is a controlling factor in the use of the mortar. Commanders must always give special consideration to the ammunition supply in assigning missions to mortars.

97. **Advance in Route Column.**—During the advance in route column the personnel of the 60mm mortar section marches under the direct command of the lieutenant commanding the weapons platoon.

98. **Approach March.**—a. The mortar section takes up a formation which will conceal its identity, if possible, and which will enable it to continue the advance with minimum losses. Depending on the terrain and hostile fire, it may move in section column, column of squad columns, line of squad columns, or line of squad columns echeloned. The platoon commander, if present, will prescribe the formation for deployment. If not prescribed, the formation will be indicated by the section sergeant.

b. The section advances within the zone of action of the company, usually in the interval between the assault and the support platoons. The advance of the section is conducted so as to take full advantage of any cover and concealment afforded by the terrain and to avoid areas under artillery and long range machine-gun fire. The chief of section regulates the movement of the mortar squads upon the leading echelon of riflemen. On approaching a ridge line, the section may be halted just in rear of the crest until the leading echelon of the company has reached the next crest.

c. The advance is made by bounds, from one suitable firing position to another. The section sergeant observes the advance of the leading riflemen and regulates the movement of the mortar squads accordingly. The mortars are not put in position, but are held ready for prompt action on signal from the company commander or the weapons platoon commander. Usually neither suitable firing positions nor suitable targets for the 60mm mortars will be available during the initial stages of the attack. **The 60mm mortars do not participate in the preparatory fires.** They are primarily weapons of oppor-

tunity and the occasions for their most effective employment will most likely occur during the critical stages of the attack. just preceeding the assault, when the fire of other supporting weapons may be masked by the advance of our riflemen. Consequently the 60mm mortar section will most frequently advance in rear of the rifle platoon or platoons making the main attack of the company until it reaches a point where suitable targets may be engaged.

d. In combat the ammunition for the mortars must be carried by hand. This fact, together with the weight of the ammunition and the difficulties of resupply, materially restricts the tactical employment of the mortars. One man can carry a maximum of ten rounds (about 35 pounds) in combat.

99. **Firing Positions.**—a. The location of firing positions is influenced by many factors. Among these factors are: the location of suitable targets, location of friendly front line troops, presence of cover and observation, fire missions assigned by the platoon leader, and the facility of ammunition supply.

b. In all cases, mortar positions must be within effective range of their targets and afford observation of the targets and of the front line troops. The maximum usable range to targets is 1,000 yards, and the distance to the front line troops should not exceed 500 yards. Accuracy of fire falls off rapidly with increase in range.

c. Whenever practicable, mortars fire from fully defiladed positions. On flat terrain, however, the occupation of open positions is sometimes necessary in order to bring the mortars close enough to the front lines and to their targets. The low relief of the piece permits it to utilize the cover afforded by minor terrain features such as shell holes, ditches, hillocks, and small rises.

d. Positions permitting covered approach from the rear greatly facilitate ammunition supply and increase the value of the mortar as a supporting weapon. This is a desirable feature but is not essential.

100. **Displacement.**—Displacement is avoided as far as possible during any period when the leading rifle echelon is in movement. It is regulated so as to cause as little interruption as possible in the continuity of mortar support. The situation determines whether the platoon should effect a displacement by section or by squad. Displacements are best effected during lulls in the action and when movement and fire attack are not immediately contemplated. When observation of the attacking echelon or the target becomes poor, the platoon leader orders the displacement of the mortars. Before moving from a masked to an open position, the platoon leader assures himself of an adequate ammunition supply. When enemy

resistance weakens and bases of fire are no longer organized, the light mortars are assigned to the support of rifle platoons. Squad leaders follow and receive further fire missions from rifle platoon leaders.

101. **Fire Direction and Control.**—The mortar squad is the basic unit of fire control. The squad leader controls the fire of his mortar from an observation post at or near the firing position of the piece. The section or platoon leader exercises immediate fire direction and concentrates or distributes the fire by assignment of targets or sectors of fire.

102. **Reorganization.**—When the attack halts for any reason, the 60mm mortar squads immediately occupy the nearest suitable firing positions and prepare to cover the reorganization of the rifle unit for a continuation of the attack, or support the defense against hostile counterattack.

SECTION 6

THE RIFLE COMPANY IN ATTACK

GENERAL

103. The Rifle Company, Composition and Armament.—a. The rifle company is composed of the following units:

Company Headquarters
3 Rifle Platoons
1 Weapons Platoon

Each rifle platoon is organized and equipped as shown in paragraph 55. The weapons platoon is organized and equipped as shown in paragraph 76.

b. Company Headquarters is organized as follows:

1 Captain, Company Commander
1 Lieutenant, executive officer
1 First Sergeant
1 Supply Sergeant
1 Mess Sergeant
1 Chief Cook
2 Corporals: one clerk, one signal
1 Field Cook
1 Assistant Cook
2 Field Musics
12 Privates: 2 messengers and signalmen, 2 supply, 8 other duty.

c. The two officers, the first sergeant and the two field musics are armed with the carbine. The remaining men are armed with the rifle.

d. Organization Tables for 1942 provides for the arming of all junior officers and most of the noncommissioned officers with th carbine, M-1. It also provides for the addition of three (3) .60 caliber antitank rifles to each rifle company, and one (1) ¼-ton truck to the company headquarters.

104. Company Headquarters.—a. Company headquarters includes the personnel necessary to assist the company commander in performing his duties of control, administration, and supply of the company. The members of company headquarters are grouped according to the nature of their duties in combat. These groups are the command group and the administration and supply group.

b. Command Group.—This group functions under the personal direction of the company commander; posts of per-

sonnel in combat dispositions are specifically prescribed by him in each situation. The group consists of the following personnel:

Captain, company commander.

Lieutenant, second-in-command of company, whose primary functions are—

To keep abreast of the tactical situation as it affects his company.

To replace the company commander if the latter should become a casualty.

To perform any duty assigned him by the company commander, including the replacement of any officer of the company who has become a casualty.

To accompany his company initially as far forward as the battalion assembly area and be present when the company attack order is issued. When the company moves forward to the attack, the second-in-command, with the first sergeant and two field musics, establishes the company command post and remains with it until his presence further forward with the company may be necessary to replace the company commander or a platoon leader if either should become a casualty.

First Sergeant.—In charge of command group.

Signal Corporal.—Controls use of light signals by the mortar section, supervises runners, assists in the organization of observation.

Field Musics.—Especially trained for duty as observers; operate with signal corporal under direct control of company commander.

Messengers and Signalmen.—One sent to battalion command post; one remains at company command post or accompanies the company commander. Four messengers, one each from the weapons platoon and the three rifle platoons remain available usually at the command post.

c. Administration and Supply Group.—The company mess and supply personnel function under the supervision of the battalion supply officer in the rear echelon. The company clerk functions under the supervision of the regimental adjutant in the rear echelon. The group is composed of the following personnel:

Supply Sergeant
Mess Sergeant
3 Cooks—one chief cook, one field cook, one assistant cook.
Company Clerk
10 Privates—2 supply, 8 other duty.

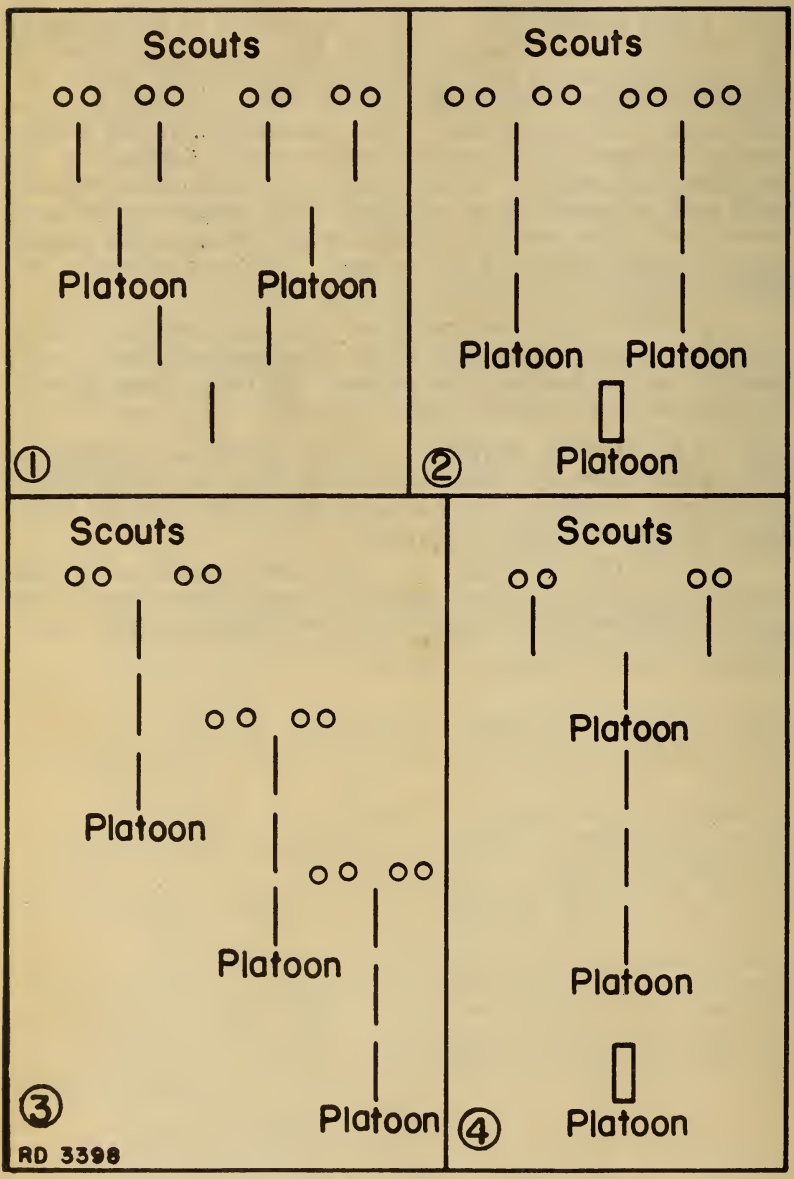
105. Route Column.—a. During the march in route column the company commander requires his officers and noncommissioned officers to enforce the rules governing march discipline and to prevent straggling. At night he requires silence and order to be maintained. The commander of the leading company regulates the rate of march as prescribed by the battalion commander. Other company commanders regulate their rate of march so as to retain their proper positions in the column. The position of the company commander is ordinarily at the head of his company. He goes wherever his duties require.

b. The command group of company headquarters is formed as a squad in charge of the first sergeant and usually marches at the head of the company. The weapons platoon marches in rear of the last rifle platoon.

106. Approach March.—a. The company commander deploys his company when ordered to do so by the battalion commander, or upon his own initiative in order to avoid undue losses in case of sudden emergency.

b. If the formation has not been prescribed by the battalion commander, the company commander orders a formation suitable to the situation. For formations see Figure 17.

490276 O - 42 - 7



DIAGRAMATIC SKETCH
COMPANY IN APPROACH MARCH

FIGURE 17

c. The approach march may be considered as **covered** or **uncovered.** It is said to be **covered** when it is made behind friendly forces sufficiently strong to insure effective protection against enemy ground attack. It is said to be **uncovered** when the advancing element is unprotected by other troops, or because of uncertainties in the situation, the elements in front cannot be relied upon to afford adequate protection.

d. When the company making the approach march is covered by other troops, the company commander advances his company by taking advantage of covered routes and avoiding gassed and shelled areas. The company will generally be disposed in depth (column); the commander usually marches with the leading element.

e. In uncovered movement, the leading company usually has two platoons in the leading echelon, each frequently reinforced by a mortar squad. The company commander assigns the leading platoons zones of reconnaissance and objectives. They cover their zones with scouts or patrols and advance by bounds from one terrain line to the next. Platoon leaders regulate the movement of scouts and patrols to assure the security of the platoon against hostile fire from points within midrange. The light machine-gun section frequently moves in the center of the interval between the two platoons, prepared to support either. The platoon in the second echelon is moved to provide protection toward the most dangerous flank. An exposed flank is covered by a security patrol.

f. If the nature of the combat formation of the company can be foreseen, the platoons are disposed in the same order in which they will form for the attack. The advance is then directed so that the platoons will find themselves directly behind the positions on which they will be employed in combat.

g. Where the nature of the combat formation cannot be foreseen, or the enemy situation is obscure, the platoons are so disposed that a change of formation can readily be made to meet any contingency. Deployment in depth either in column or echelon is ordinarily best suited for this purpose. When the company is so deployed care is taken to see that distances between platoons are not too short. Excessive distance can be corrected by closing up toward the enemy, whereas if the distances are too short there is danger of unnecessary losses from enemy fire, of the necessity of gaining proper distances by a retrograde movement, and of pinning rear units to the ground without possibility of maneuver.

h. Having received his orders from the battalion commander, the company commander usually extends his company by issuing to his platoon leaders oral orders which prescribe the formation. In case of emergency he extends his company by use of signals or commands.

i. Upon extension of the company or immediately after an extension that is made rapidly, the company commander designates the base platoon, assigns an azimuth, and designates a distant landmark or terrain feature on which to guide. Ordinarily the battalion commander gives the azimuth in his orders.

j. The company commander is responsible for the security of his company the instant he leaves the main column of the battalion. When the advance is not covered by other troops, a leading company covers its advance with scouts or patrols which deal with any resistance encountered from hostile advanced posts and patrols. The company commander takes such additional measures as are necessary for the rapid cleaning up of hostile points of resistance. He will not permit the advance of the company to be unduly delayed.

k. The leading platoon, or platoons, furnish the necessary security in the direction of advance. Flank protection is provided for the company by the company commander, and will usually consist of small flank security detachments. Normally, the support platoon will be assigned the mission of providing security for the flanks of the company. The responsibility for the security of any unit rests solely on the commander of such unit. Every platoon commander is still responsible for the security of his own front and flanks. Such responsibility never ceases even though security measures such as a general covering force have been established for the command as a whole. The company commander of a rifle company in the approach march will provide for the security of each company flank by issuing the necessary orders to platoon leaders. Company flanks are protected by locating the support platoon so that it can be used to meet an attack against either flank. Patrols from the support platoon may also be detailed for flank security. Contact with adjacent companies is a usual function of the flank security patrol. Patrols of about four men including an automatic rifleman may be detailed to protect each company flank. These flank patrols will march sufficiently in rear of the flanks of an assault company to allow themselves maneuver space in case of attack against the flank they are protecting. When contact is lost with the adjacent unit, the patrol notifies the company commander and continues on its protective mission. When flank patrols are not used, and visual contact between assault companies is insufficient or impossible, contact is maintained with adjacent units by placing connecting files or groups of from two to four men on each flank of the company; these groups are usually detailed from the support and will march approximately abreast of it. See Figure 18.

l. During the approach march the automatic rifles of the platoons are used as units to provide antiaircraft security, especially at every halt. The company commander is responsible for the posting of AA and AT lookouts.

m. In approaching hostile forces, the company adopts an elastic formation suitable to the terrain and the situation. Distances and intervals are increased or decreased according to the terrain and the necessity for taking cover from enemy fire. Platoon, and squad leaders, when necessary, on their own initiative, prescribe formations best adapted to the situation.

n. The company commander insures that his base platoon guides on the base company; and in case his company is the base unit for the battalion, he assures the correct and accurate progress of his base platoon.

o. Suitable covered routes of advance are so utilized that only indistinct and fleeting targets are presented to enemy artillery.

p. Gassed and shelled areas are normally avoided even if it becomes necessary to deviate temporarily from the assigned direction of advance.

q. When it becomes necessary to cross certain dangerous areas, such as roads, crests, or embankments, it may be advisable to do so by a rush of the entire company in order to obtain the effect of surprise and to present only a fleeting target to the enemy; or, if the locality should be actually under fire, by successive rushes of small groups which reform on a designated line.

r. When the approach march is made at night, distances and intervals between units are decreased. At times it may require actual physical contact between files. The company commander regulates the rate of march so as to insure control. Luminous compasses should be provided.

s. When the approach march is made through woods, distances and intervals between units are decreased until adjacent units are visible. If the woods are too dense for such disposition, connecting files are used between units. The front of the company is covered by scouts who precede the leading platoons at such distance as to remain generally in sight. The company commander regulates the rate of march so as to insure control. Special care is taken to protect the flanks. Connecting groups on the flanks are assigned the additional mission of flank protection. The direction of march is controlled by the use of a compass.

t. After the extension of the company from route column, the company commander maintains contact with adjacent units throughout all stages of the advance and combat. This contact is maintained by placing connecting files or half squads on the flanks of the company. These groups are usually detailed from the support. They march approximately abreast of the support. Loss of contact with adjacent units is reported at once.

u. A company commander maintains communication with his platoon leaders, and battalion commander, and adjacent units during all stages of the advance and combat.

v. The company commander conducts constant personal reconnaissance during all stages of the advance and combat.

w. During the approach march, the company commander is with or in advance of his leading units. He moves to points from which he is able to secure the best possible observation and thus anticipate the course of action. He should, however, not lose control of his company. When danger of serious losses arises, the company commander should be with his company.

x. The approach march is pushed as close to the enemy as possible by the company commander. Assault echelons are deployed in skirmish line only when it becomes necessary to reply to the enemy fire in order to advance or to avoid undue losses.

y. During the approach march the weapons platoon ordinarily marches close in rear of the company, or between the forward rifle platoons and the support. It adopts formations similar to those of adjacent riflemen. The mortar is transported on carts as long as the situation and terrain will permit.

107. Assembly Areas.—a. The approach march may terminate in the occupation of an assembly area preparatory to deploying for the attack. This area is usually that prescribed by the battalion commander, and is occupied by other units of the battalion. Exceptionally, the company may occupy an assembly area prescribed by the company commander.

b. If a halt is ordered in the battalion assembly area opportunity is taken to rest the men, issue extra ammunition, reconnoiter for the attack, and to issue orders for the attack, preferably at a point where the zone of operations is visible.

c. The assembly position should provide cover and concealment from hostile ground and aerial observation. The company commander must so dispose his company within this area as to minimize possible losses and yet maintain control. This may include the use of security detachments to prevent surprise attacks by hostile ground troops. Rolls are usually dropped, and extra ammunition distributed from the ammunition train, while in the assembly area, if this has not been previously done. The ammunition train vehicle then returns to battalion control.

d. In land warfare, it is the practice for infantry units to carry only a small amount of ammunition in their belts at the time they are carrying their rolls. The machine-gun units have their usual loads on their carts, so this statement does not apply to them. When combat is imminent in order not to weight down the men with too much equipment, the rolls

(blankets, shoes, shelter half and extra clothing) are dropped and stacked, and the ammunition which is habitually carried in the ammunition train, termed, "extra ammunition," is issued to the troops. An advance guard will be issued extra ammunition prior to the beginning of the march.

e. Before the company leaves the assembly area, the company commander should receive the attack order from his battalion commander. When possible, this order should be issued from a position which affords a view of the ground over which the attack is to be made. When ordered to report for the battalion order, the company commander directs the second in command or the senior platoon leader to assume command of the company, and proceeds to the battalion command post or other designated place with two or more runners. The battalion order should contain the following instructions for the companies:

The situation, location of adjacent units, and supporting fires, including artillery.

The mission of the battalion including the formation, zone of action, line of departure, and the time of attack.

Instructions for the employment of each rifle company.

Instructions for the employment of the weapons company (machine guns, mortars, and AA-AT guns).

Instructions for units attached to the battalion.

Instructions for flank protection and maintaining contact.

Location of command posts, aid station, and ammunition distributing point.

f. Upon receipt of the battalion attack order the company commander makes a map study, plans his reconnaissance and selects the place where he will issue his orders. He directs the necessary movement of platoon leaders and of his company. He confers with adjacent commanders regarding fire support to be given his company, positions, and contact with their units. He then makes a personal reconnaissance noting positions of adjacent units and supporting weapons, his observation, enemy positions, and initial company objectives. He then formulates his plan of attack. If his platoon leaders are not supplied with maps, he has simple sketches prepared and issues them with the attack order.

108. Deployment for Attack.—a. The company commander issues his orders for deployment for attack after he has received his orders from the battalion commander, except in sudden emergencies where it is necessary to return the fire of the enemy at once.

b. While the company commander is engaged on reconnaissance, or is forward receiving the orders of the battalion commander, or is otherwise necessarily absent, the second-in-command controls the company. When the situation requires

prompt movement, and it is impracticable for the company commander to lead the company toward the line of departure, the second-in-command is employed for this purpose.

c. The company commander engages his company by issuing oral orders to his platoon leaders. Exceptionally, the order may be issued to all officers, section leaders, squad leaders, and the members of the company command group.

d. Under favorable circumstances, a complete attack order prescribing the duties of each unit is issued at a point from which enemy positions can be pointed out. However, it must not be assumed that it will be practicable in every situation to formulate a complete attack order. More often the company attack order will be fragmentary in form and may consist of partial orders as the situation develops. The initial objective should be the first terrain feature that can be seen within the enemy lines which must be taken before the battalion objective can be taken. The initial objective for a platoon is the first natural step in the advance of that platoon. The initial company objective will usually be several hundred yards further within enemy territory, and the battalion objective still further. Upon capture of the initial objective the platoon is promptly reorganized and the assault continued against the next platoon objective. In this way the attack proceeds with each unit reorganizing on its successive objectives and continuing the attack until the battalion objective is taken or the attack is definitely stopped.

e. The orders of the company commander cover the following points:

All information of the enemy not already known to his subordinates. Special reference to recent information obtained by reconnaissance and from higher authorities. All available information regarding supporting troops, adjacent units, and our own artillery support.

A brief outline of the company plan of attack to include: The company mission or objective, the time of attack, the direction of attack, the line of departure, the zone of action, and the formation. The "mission," is usually stated by giving the company objective; if no objective is assigned the mission may be stated simply, "to attack in a certain direction." The "time of attack," is usually a definite hour or minute. The "direction of attack," may be indicated by a terrain feature or by a compass azimuth. The "line of departure," may be stated as a line formed by a terrain feature, or an area from which the attack will be launched. The "zone of action," may be stated by giving a direction and frontage, or assigning a base platoon. The designation of boundary lines for a company is both difficult and confusing unless ideal terrain features exist. The "formation," is a simple statement of the manner in which the company will be deployed for the attack; as, "Two platoons abreast in assault and one in support."

The assignment of an objective or combat mission to each platoon: (Each assault platoon should be assigned an objective, or given a frontage and direction of attack. The support platoons will be assigned an initial support area, or told to follow the assault at a certain distance.)

The orders to the weapons platoon.

The orders to any attached units such as machine guns. (Orders for these weapons include the initial positions and the initial supporting fires, if any, to be executed by each type of weapon.)

The location of the battalion ammunition distributing point, the battalion aid station, and such other administrative instructions as are known or desirable.

The location of the battalion command post and the company command posts.

f. The company may be deployed with one or two rifle platoons in the assault echelon, and with two rifle platoons or one platoon in support, depending on the frontage assigned, the information available as to enemy dispositions, and the terrain. In exceptional cases, all three rifle platoons may be placed in the assault echelon. The mortar and light machine-gun sections are assigned positions and missions supporting the attack of rifle units.

For the attack, the company adopts a formation which can be easily controlled, will reduce casualties to a minimum, and is capable of rapid and easy change to meet unforeseen conditions. The formation will depend upon the known dispositions of the enemy, the terrain, the mission, and the frontage assigned. Normally, the average frontage assigned to a company is from 200 to 500 yards. A rifle platoon can effectively attack on a frontage of from 100 to 200 yards.

A company may attack with all rifle platoons abreast in assault; with two platoons abreast in assault and one in support; in column with one platoon in assault and two in support; or in echelon with one platoon in assault and two in support. When the nature of the combat can be foreseen, the company may advance from the assembly area in the approach march formation with the platoons of the company deployed in the same relative position as will be used in the attack.

Attacking with all rifle platoons abreast develops initially the maximum fire power of the company and enables it to attack on a maximum frontage. It has the disadvantage of restricting maneuver through a lack of depth. This formation should only be employed when the disposition of the enemy is definitely known and when the company has been assigned both a broad front and a close objective.

Attacking with platoons in column provides maximum security and greatly facilitates maneuver. It has the disadvantage of delivering initially only a portion of the fire power

of the company and limits the initial frontage covered by the company. Such a formation should be used when the company is to attack to a great depth, when the enemy dispositions are not definitely known, or when the front assigned the company is narrow.

Attacking with two rifle platoons in assault and one in support develops initially considerable fire power and still provides for security and retains power of maneuver. This formation has greater fire power but less capability of maneuver than the formation in column; on the other hand, it develops less fire power and more capability of maneuver than the formation with platoons abreast. This formation should be used whenever the front assigned the company is too great to be properly covered by one platoon and the terrain allows.

Attacking with one rifle platoon in assault and two in support echeloned to the right or left is an exposed flank formation. It may be used when the company is attacking on the exposed flank of a flank battalion, and has as an additional mission the protection of that flank.

The formations described may be varied due to the nature of the terrain, enemy dispositions, or lack of information of the enemy. Support platoons may be echeloned to a flank at any time during the attack to take advantage of cover, to furnish greater security, or in order to be better prepared to further the plan of attack.

It is neither necessary nor advisable to occupy physically the entire frontage assigned. Intervals are left between platoons in order to take advantage of cover, to facilitate future maneuver, to avoid areas swept by hostile fire, gassed areas, or to allow our own machine guns to support the attack when no suitable positions exist for overhead fire.

The approach march formation is retained as long as possible in order to facilitate control. The formation is not necessarily changed when the line of departure is crossed, but a less vulnerable formation should always be adopted when there is apparent danger of probable casualties by hostile fire.

g. Ordinarily a rifle platoon is made responsible for a front which does not exceed 200 yards. It does not necessarily cover this frontage with a continuous line, but operates in squad groups and covers the unoccupied frontage with fire, observation and patrols. The unoccupied interval allows space for maneuvering.

h. The weapons platoon is ordinarily employed under control of the company commander to provide close support for the rifle platoons and to assist the advance of adjacent units. Under exceptional circumstances one or more squads of this platoon may be attached to rifle platoons. Such employment can be justified only: when suitable firing positions from which close support is possible cannot be found,

when a rifle platoon is operating through dense woods, or when a rifle platoon is detached from the company or is operating on a semi-independent mission.

The weapons platoon, less any elements which may be attached to rifle platoons, operates as a tactical unit under the control of its leader whenever such employment is feasible. However, the characteristics and method of employment of the mortars differ so widely from those of the light machine guns that the two sections will usually be separated in position and in mission. When direct control of the platoon as a unit becomes impracticable, the platoon leader is usually directed to supervise the mortar section and the company commander retains control of the light machine guns.

Due to the difficulties of ammunition supply, the 60mm mortars do not participate in preparatory fires. For the same reason they are not employed to engage any target which can be successfully engaged by flat trajectory weapons. They are primarily weapons of opportunity and their fire is ordinarily reserved for use against definitely located hostile machine guns and mortars and for use during the critical stages of the attack, just preceeding the assault, when the fire of other supporting weapons may be masked by the advance of our riflemen. They should be placed in position, prepared to fire, prior to the start of the attack whenever suitable firing positions exist and there is reasonable probability of their early employment. Frequently, however, suitable firing positions will not be available during the initial stages of the attack nor will suitable targets be present. Consequently the 60mm mortar section will often advance closely in rear of a designated assault rifle platoon, by bounds from one suitable firing position to another, until suitable targets appear.

Whether the light machine guns should be placed initially in position and participate in preparatory fires or support by fire the initial stages of the attack depends primarily upon:

The availability of sufficient ammunition.

The adequacy of the supporting fires of the weapons company of the battalion and of the artillery.

The availability of suitable firing positions.

As the attack progresses these guns must be kept well forward so as to give the closest possible support to the assault elements. The superior efficiency of flanking fire must be kept constantly in mind and every effort made to maneuver these guns to fire across the front of their own company, if it is held up, from positions in the rear of adjacent companies whose assault has gone forward or across the front of one platoon of their own company, whose advance is retarded, from positions in the rear of an adjacent platoon whose advance has progressed far enough so that positions in its rear are on the flank of enemy resistance.

Adjacent companies which have been held up may be assisted by fire across their front by light machine guns which have advanced in close support of companies whose attack has progressed more rapidly.

i. Prior to the fire fight the company commander is usually with or in advance of his assault platoons. Preferably he should lead his company from the assembly area toward the line of departure, using an approach march formation until it becomes necessary to deploy.

109. The Conduct of the Attack.—a. The formation in small columns is generally maintained by the assault platoons until they are compelled to reply to the enemy's fire in order to advance. The company then completes its deployment.

b. Ordinarily fire by the platoon is opened on order of the platoon leader. Company commanders may, however, reserve to themselves the authority for opening fire. This is not the ordinary case, but may be used during periods of reduced visibility.

c. Each platoon advances as rapidly as the circumstances of the fight on its front and flanks permit.

d. Once the fire fight has commenced, the advance of the assault echelon is mainly in the hands of the leaders of the assault platoons and squads.

e. When the battalion attacks following an uncovered approach march, the leading company covers the assembly for action and the organization of the initial base of fire of the battalion. It outposts the assembly position in accordance with the general considerations described for an outpost support. On the arrival of other companies it may be assigned to a position in the attacking echelon or withdrawn and placed in reserve.

f. The company commander organizes a company base of fire when adequate cover for his company exists within light mortar range of the objective, or terrain on the flank offers an open field of fire for the light machine guns. These conditions may exist on the battalion base of fire, or cover in advance thereof may offer facilities for the organization of a company base; in the latter case such cover becomes the initial company objective. When tanks lead the attack, the light machine guns are emplaced for the support of the tanks in their advance into the hostile position in accordance with the battalion plan of supporting fires; they cease fire when the infantry begins its advance.

g. Where by reason of the terrain and the lack of an open field of fire on the flanks it is impracticable to organize a base of fire on the final assembly position of the company, the light machine guns and light mortars are distributed so as best to support the advance of the attacking echelon. Light mortars, following the attacking echelon by bounds, seek to

gain a covered firing position within midrange of the objective. The light machine guns move in accordance with the plan of attack. They follow adjacent units to positions from which they can flank the advance of their own company; or they move to positions in the zone of their own company to afford flanking support to adjacent units, and by their fire hold down cross fires endangering their own company from hostile elements on the flanks of the company zone.

h. During the fire fight the principal duties of the company commander are:

(1) To maneuver his support echelon so as to outflank or envelop any resistance holding up the assault echelon.

(2) To make necessary dispositions to protect the flanks of the assault echelon against counterattack.

(3) To prevent the support echelon from merging itself into the first line, and when it is not advancing to keep it under the best available cover within supporting distance of the assault echelon. During progression, to cause the support echelon to follow at supporting distance. It usually follows from 100 to 400 yards in rear of the assault echelon moving by bounds from one covered position to another.

(4) To keep the battalion commander constantly informed of the situation.

(5) To carry out the necessary personal reconnaissance and observation so that he is constantly informed of everything taking place to his front and flanks.

(6) The commander of an assault company is accompanied by a messenger agent from a machine-gun platoon of the weapons company if the platoon is in direct support. If his company is making the main attack of the battalion he may also be accompanied by a messenger agent from the 81mm mortar platoon of that company. This is the exceptional case when the 81mm mortar platoon or one section of the platoon is in direct support of his company. The duty of the agents is to transmit to their respective platoons the requests of the rifle company commander for machine gun and 81mm mortar fire. During the conduct of the attack, accordingly, it is the duty of the rifle company commander to notify these messenger agents of his requirements for supporting fires from the battalion weapons; **specifying when, where, and for how long the fire is desired.** If he is being supported by battalion weapons in general support, the rifle company commander transmits his requests for fire to the battalion commander, or to the commander of the weapons company, utilizing his own messengers, or the representatives of the respective units when present. If artillery fire is desired his requests are made to the battalion commander.

(7) To maintain the morale of the company by personal example.

(8) To interfere with the platoon commanders only when it is apparent that they are not functioning properly. Great care should be exercised in this respect so as not to destroy their initiative.

(9) To reorganize the company whenever opportunity presents itself and to reorganize his fire support.

(10) To insure mutual support of assault platoons and to lend support to adjacent companies.

(11) To see that prisoners are sent to the battalion command post.

(12) To see that no effectives are allowed to go to the rear with wounded men.

(13) To anticipate the requirements of his rifle platoons for supporting fire, and to arrange for its delivery, either by ordering it by his organic supporting weapons, or by requesting it if it is to be delivered by weapons under control of a higher headquarters.

(14) To employ the weapons platoon in close support of the rifle platoons.

i. The company commander posts himself where he can best carry out the missions outlined above. Usually he is with the support or between the support and the assault echelon. He must at all times be at a point from which he can observe the action of the assault echelon. When the support has been entirely committed he joins that part of the line from which he can best control the advance of his company. He may have to post observers at some distance from him to maintain observation over terrain that he himself cannot see.

j. The distance of the support platoon from the assault echelon is dependent upon the situation, and the terrain. Keep it at all times close enough to the assault units to be able to effect timely reinforcement. In general, it should follow the assault echelon as closely as cover and the possibility of movement toward a flank will permit, advancing by bounds from one covered position to another. It should be employed under the following conditions: when its employment will materially assist the advance, to prevent disaster (usually not until platoon supports have been used), or when supporting fires cannot be secured in sufficient quantity and in time to permit the leading echelons to accomplish the mission of the company.

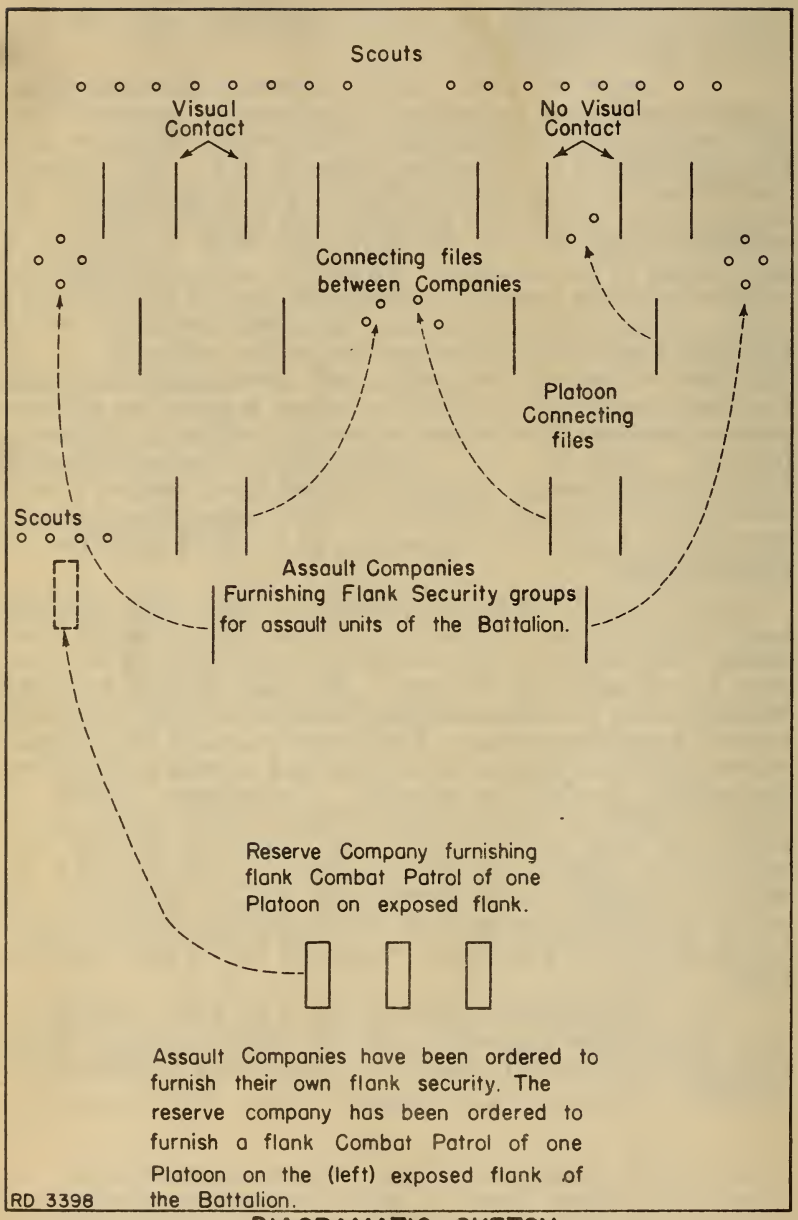
110. **Continuing the Attack.**—a. In the course of the attack, the company commander seeks to bring about the closest possible coordination between the movement of the rifle platoons and the fire of his supporting weapons. He endeavors to combine the action of the entire company with the support of the weapons company and the artillery. The company commander will frequently call for artillery and mortar fire in support of his plan of action, and he must at all times keep

the battalion commander informed of his situation and intentions in order that the latter may effectively employ the supporting fires at his disposal.

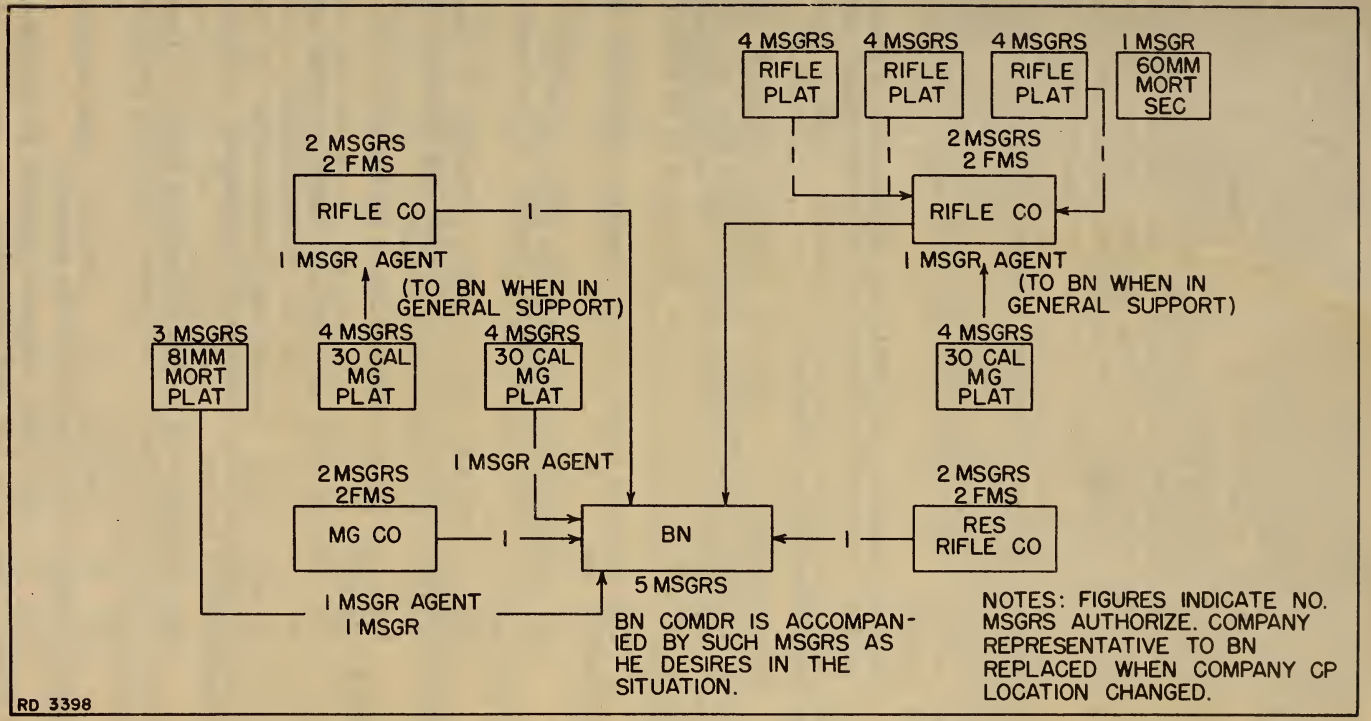
b. One of the most effective means of coordinating the action of attacking and supporting elements and combining their action is the designation of successive objectives and the organization of successive bases of fire. The company commander designates successive objectives throughout the course of the attack, and wherever the situation requires he organizes a base of fire (See paragraph 14-h) in support of each bound of the advance. Where the company supporting weapons cannot be put into action initially, due to insufficient range or lack of field of fire, they follow the advance to firing positions from which effective fire on the objective can be delivered. This will frequently call for pushing the light machine guns in behind the rifle platoon making the greatest advance, or behind an adjacent company gaining an advanced position. Advantage may also be taken of an open field of fire on the flanks of the company to bring fire to bear on hostile resistance in front of adjacent rearward companies. A support platoon is generally disposed so as to afford protection on exposed flanks.

c. For the proper employment of the light machine guns, the company commander must at all times be thoroughly informed as to the situation on the flanks of the company as well as on his own front. The movement of the light machine guns into the attacking echelon is justified only in case of grave emergency. Their merging with the riflemen seldom yields commensurate returns and usually makes them unavailable for flanking missions. Commanders should not allow the lack of flanking fields of fire to lead machine gun squads to seek employment in the attacking echelon, but should as a general rule, hold them out of the fight for use when a situation favoring flanking support develops. He makes no effort to fill gaps on his flanks but rather exploits the flanking field of fire which they offer for his light machine guns.

d. He establishes direct liaison with heavy weapons in the company zone and asks for heavy weapons support of his projected action either directly or through the battalion commander.



DIAGRAMATIC SKETCH
SECURITY IN THE APPROACH MARCH
FIGURE 18



A DISPOSITION OF MESSENGERS IN AN INFANTRY BATTALION

FIGURE 19

111. **The Assault.**—In the course of the attack, the company commander endeavors to sense the point where resistance is weakening and to concentrate his forces for the assault. He assembles his support platoon and supporting weapons as far forward as the situation and terrain permit.

A general assault by the entire company is usually preceeded by a bombardment by combat aviation or by artillery and takes place at a prearranged hour. The assaulting echelon moves as close as possible to the hostile position under the cover of aviation attack, artillery and mortar fire and delivers the charge as soon as the supporting fire lifts.

The assaulting echelon pushes through the depth of the resistance without allowing the enemy an opportunity to reconstitute his defense. Available supports are put in where opposition has given way or slackened. The company takes prompt measures for the maintenance of direction of the attack, without lateral deviation, straight through to the battalion objective.

The company does not devote any of its forces to cleaning up isolated resistances holding out after the assault but leaves these to be dealt with by subsequent echelons especially charged with that mission.

112. **Reorganization.**—a. After a successful assault, the company pursues the retreating enemy with fire and the company commander reorganizes his command on the captured ground in order to hold it or continue the attack in an orderly manner.

b. The principal duties of the company commander in reorganization are:

(1) To appoint platoon leaders when necessary.

(2) To direct the platoon leaders to reorganize their platoons.

(3) To request the battalion commander to send forward sufficient ammunition to replenish his ammunition supply or to send his own detail when necessary.

(4) To see that ammunition is gathered from the dead and wounded.

(5) To see that the leading platoons push out small groups to the front to cover the reorganization.

(6) To notify the battalion commander of the situation, the approximate strength of the company, and hostile identifications secured.

(7) If supported by heavy machine guns or 81mm mortars, to confer with their commanders regarding positions to be occupied by the guns.

(8) To reorganize his company headquarters, replacing casualties with men from the platoons.

(9) To move the weapons platoon to positions from which it can cover the reorganization.

113. Pursuit.—a. When the company reaches its objective the retreating enemy is pursued by fire as long as he is within range. The company commander sends out the necessary patrols to maintain contact with the retreating enemy and to provide security. He then accomplishes the reorganization as outlined above.

b. The company does not take up the direct pursuit without orders from the battalion commander.

c. When the company has been ordered to pursue, it moves forward in deployed or approach formation unless otherwise directed.

114. Organization of the Ground.—a. When the advance is definitely stopped, the company commander establishes his firing line and support position as directed by the battalion commander, and organizes his company area. In the absence of direction he acts upon his own initiative.

b. The principal duties of a company commander during the organization of the ground are:

(1) To send local security detachments to the front in observation on high ground in order to cover the organization of the firing line from effective, surprise, aimed small arms fire. 600 yards is about the maximum limit from which such local security is able to give effective warning with any degree of reliability.

(2) To decide upon the arrangement of the platoons in the area.

(3) To assign the areas to be organized for defense.

(4) To locate the company command post.

(5) To establish contact with adjacent units and the rear.

(6) To assign sectors of fire to the different units of the company and arrange for their mutual support by flanking fire.

(7) To dispose the weapons platoon to support the defense, and to confer with the commanders of supporting machine gun and 81mm mortar units as to the fire support of those weapons.

(8) To make a report of his dispositions to the battalion commander, preferably by a simple sketch of the position showing the dispositions.

(9) To start the work of organization of the ground.

c. Following an attack, the organization of the ground by an assault company is very difficult. The assault troops are usually badly disorganized and scattered. During the day it may be necessary for the company to dig in just where it finds itself and wait for darkness to complete the organization of the position.

d. During this phase the second-in-command goes where his services are most needed.

THE RESERVE RIFLE COMPANY

115. The Reserve Company.—When the battalion commander extends his battalion in an approach or attack formation he usually assigns one or two rifle companies as the battalion reserve.

116. Missions of the Reserve Company.—In an attack the battalion reserve is disposed in such a manner that it may quickly be brought into action when assigned any one of the following missions:

a. To envelop points of resistance developed by the assault echelon.

b. To cover the flanks of the assault companies.

c. To repel counterattacks, especially against the flanks.

d. To assist the advance of the assault echelon.

e. To assist the progress of adjacent units.

f. To take over the role of all, or a part of the assault echelon.

g. To furnish details and carrying parties for the assault companies.

h. To provide connection between adjacent units.

i. For illustrations see Figures 7, 8, and 9.

117. Formations.—The formations of a reserve company are governed by the same principles as those of an assault company.

118. Movements.—a. The company commander moves his company forward by bounds from one position to another or from cover to cover, as directed by the battalion commander or in accordance with the general instructions of the battalion commander.

b. The company commander selects and reconnoiters his forward route and his next position before the company is moved forward. Usually the battalion commander will select the new general location and order the move, but the company commander does not await instructions in this respect. When the situation demands a move, he so reports to the battalion commander and requests instructions.

c. A reserve company must always be within supporting distance of the assault echelon.

119. Reconnaissance.—a. In order to be able to carry out the different missions outlined above, the company commander must keep himself constantly informed of the situation.

b. He keeps himself informed:

(1) By personal reconnaissance and observation from advantageous points of the terrain.

(2) By observation stations manned by the field musics of the company.

(3) By reconnoitering patrols accompanying the assault companies.

(4) By posting himself with the battalion commander, or at the battalion command post while his company is in reserve.

(5) By messengers who are with the battalion commander.

c. A reserve company commander often precedes his company and takes station where observation is favorable. Frequently he accompanies the battalion commander or is within easy communication with him.

120. Flank Protection.—a. The reserve company covers the flanks of the assault units when necessary. The company commander has the flanks of the assault companies constantly in mind. When the situation requires, he disposes elements of his company in such a manner that he can cover a threatened flank by fire from a position in rear. In making dispositions for this purpose he does not allow his units to pass beyond his control.

b. A reserve company is never employed, except in an emergency, without the orders of the battalion commander.

SECTION 7

THE AA-AT PLATOON

BATTALION WEAPONS COMPANY

121. The AA-AT Platoon, Composition and Armament.—a. The AA-AT Platoon consists of the following:

Platoon Headquarters
Two 20mm AA-AT Gun Squads
One Ammunition Squad

Platoon headquarters consists of:

1 Lieutenant, platoon leader
1 Platoon Sergeant, second-in-command
1 Sergeant, observer
2 Privates, messengers and signalmen

The privates are armed with the rifle and the remainder are armed with the carbine.

b. The 1942 Tables of Organization call for one 20mm AA-AT gun in each gun squad. However, to date, this type weapon has not been issued. In its place, in each gun squad, has been substituted one .50 caliber machine gun, with antitank mount only. This makes it necessary to depend upon the .30 caliber heavy machine guns of the weapons company for antiaircraft defense. This platoon, therefore, can function only as an antitank platoon until the 20mm AA-AT gun is furnished. This section will deal only with the .50 caliber AT machine gun.

122. Characteristics.—The battalion antitank weapon has the following characteristics:

High initial velocity.
Adequate armor penetration at close and midrange.
High rate of fire.
High mobility and low relief relative to other antitank weapons, permitting movement by manhandling for considerable distances and facilitating unobtrusive occupation of firing position. The weapon and crew occupy only a small area and are easily concealed.

123. Missions.—The construction and characteristics of this weapon indicate its employment in close proximity to the troops to be defended. It employs direct fire and engages ground targets only. In moving situations, it will frequently be the principal reliance of the troops in the assault echelons for immediate antitank security.

124. Duties of Command Group.—a. Platoon Leader. The platoon functions under the company commander until it is

detached by the assignment of tactical missions by the battalion commander. Further coordination by the company commander is limited to arrangements for rationing and administrative matters. In the approach march he controls the movement of the platoon under the instructions of the battalion commander. He selects routes and successive locations of positions of readiness with a view to immediate AT defense. He leads the platoon when it moves as a unit. In combat, whenever practicable, he assigns sectors of fire and firing position areas. Where extensive fronts must be covered, he assigns to squads the mission of providing AT security for designated rifle companies.

b. Platoon Sergeant.—The platoon sergeant is the second-in-command of the platoon and assistant to the platoon leader. He brings up the rear of the platoon, checks straggling, and keeps constantly in touch with the situation to the rear and flanks of the platoon.

c. Sergeant, Observer.—The sergeant, observer, installs and supervises the operation of the platoon observation post. He assists the platoon leader in setting up firing data and has charge of fire control equipment.

d. Corporal, Squad Leader.—The squad leader is responsible for the execution of fire orders and for the discipline of the squad. When assigned an approximate gun position, he fixes the exact location of the gun. He directs the preparation, occupation, camouflage and entrenchment of the position, and the movement into position. When the gun is assigned an independent mission, he exercises fire control of his squad.

e. Messengers.—The messengers are in the platoon headquarters. One messenger remains with the platoon leader and the other reports to the weapons company commander or the battalion commander.

125. **Method of Movement.**—The guns and equipment are carried as far forward as possible on their carts. The final movement to position is by hand. Individual loads are sufficiently light to permit manhandling over considerable distances.

126. **Crew Requirements.**—Three men are required to keep one gun in operation. All members of the squad are trained to handle the weapon and replacement of casualties is automatic.

127. **Approach March.**—a. The development order of the battalion commander usually detaches the platoon from the weapons company for the execution of missions of antitank protection. The platoon moves in such distribution as will most readily afford protection to the rifle echelon which will constitute the principal combat element of the battalion, or the element upon which, in emergency, a deployment may be

expected to be based. This distribution will depend upon the extent of front considered suitable for hostile tank attack. When the platoon moves as a unit, it will generally move near the center of the front to be covered. Distribution by squads may be necessary in order to cover an extensive front. If the situation clearly indicates danger of mechanized attack from a flank, the platoon marches on the menaced flank. Regimental antitank units are, however, the principal agencies of antitank flank protection. The battalion weapons are ordinarily concentrated for the frontal protection of the battalion. The security of the platoon is always secondary to the mission of protection of the rifle units.

b. The platoon leader reconnoiters favorable routes of advance, locating obstacles and gassed and shelled areas, detouring where necessary. He moves with the leading rifle company and reconnoiters firing positions on each objective of battalion movement. He prepares to put his weapons into position immediately upon their arrival. Unless the battalion is to move out immediately, the AT guns occupy or cover positions immediately in rear of the firing positions during a halt. "The cover position is a position immediately in rear of the fire position which affords protection to the riflemen, or to a weapon, from hostile flat-trajectory fire."

c. The platoon leader always informs himself as to the objective of the next bound designated by the battalion commander. It is essential that he precede his unit by sufficient distance to insure such reconnaissance as will enable him to issue early instructions for changes in the disposition of his platoon.

128. **Preparation for Action.**—a. The battalion commander's order forms the basis for the platoon leader's preliminary reconnaissance for firing and cover positions. Further orders for the occupation of an assembly position enable him to make a more complete decision as to his dispositions. The location of the rifle units and the field of fire which must be covered to protect them fix the position areas of the antitank weapons. The quick determination of this area and prompt movement thereto is essential for the antitank security of the battalion.

b. The battalion commander's instructions to the platoon leader follow the standard five paragraph form and should include the following:

Information of the enemy, especially hostile tanks in the vicinity, identification of same, and assembly areas for hostile tank attack.

Information of friendly supporting troops in the zone, especially tanks, including their proposed movements, plan of action, identifying marks and signals; supporting artillery concentrations.

Information of the terrain, especially natural tank obstacles and ground favorable to hostile tank action.

Details of the battalion plan of action that indicate:

Initial location and objectives of rifle companies.

Location of battalion base of fire and prearranged fires of weapons company units.

Location of battalion command post and observation post.

Mission of the platoon; sectors of fire and frontage to be covered, or rifle units to be protected; general position areas.

Liaison with rifle units (where messages can reach leading rifle company commanders).

General instructions for displacement.

Location of battalion ammunition distributing point, and routes thereto.

129. **Antitank Security in Attack.**—In the occupation of the assembly area, the battalion antitank weapons are ordinarily assigned the mission of frontal antitank security. The guns are assigned overlapping sectors of surveillance. The platoon leader establishes an observation post from which he can best observe to the front and flanks over the entire battalion zone. Where the emplacements are widely separated, opening of fire is released to squad leaders. All personnel of the platoon must at all times be informed of the location and movements of friendly tanks, their identification and warning signals, and distinguishing features of hostile tanks. They must also know the location of the AA-AT lookouts posted by the rifle company commanders, and be on the alert for signals indicating the presence of hostile tanks.

130. **Positions.**—a. The antitank weapons always occupy open firing positions. In view of their limitation to close and midrange missions, they should, when practicable, be emplaced near the center of the sector of fire. The field of fire to the front and flanks within close range (about 500 yards) should be opened.

b. There should be cover in the immediate rear of the firing position for occupancy by the weapon and crew prior to opening fire. Artificial cover should be constructed where natural cover is not available.

c. Gun emplacements should be separated by sufficient distance to insure against simultaneous destruction by a single projectile, but be close enough to permit effective control; about 50 to 100 yards should be sufficient.

d. Alternate positions are always constructed. The guns are moved to them after firing at one group of hostile tanks from their primary positions. If the guns are left in their primary positions, they will be destroyed by hostile mortar and accompanying artillery fire. This fire is immediate and heavy.

131. Occupation of Position.—a. The platoon leader or the platoon sergeant indicates the approximate positions of the weapons. The squad leaders then fix their definite location, prepare the position and the cover position, take all practicable measures for the camouflage of the weapon emplacements and posts of the crew, clear the fields of fire, and have sufficient ammunition brought to the position.

b. Whenever possible, the squad initially occupies a cover position while the squad leaders observe and prepare firing data. The gunner and assistant gunner move the weapon into position on the squad leader's order. The rest of the squad remains in the cover position. Except for observers, both weapon and crew occupy the cover position when not firing. Observation is organized to cover the fields of view to the front, flanks, and rear of the position.

c. Supplementary positions for fire toward either flank are selected, prepared, and camouflaged.

132. Fire Direction and Control.—a. The principal factors determining the echelon of command exercising the functions of fire direction and control over antitank units are the frontage to be defended, the nature of the terrain, and the extent to which the position is covered by antitank obstacles.

b. The platoon is theoretically capable of covering, from closely adjoining emplacements, an unobstructed front determined by the effective antitank range (about 500 yards). If a greater frontage is to be covered, the emplacements must be separated by a distance depending upon the excess frontage. In such cases fire control is exercised by the squad leaders. The platoon leader directs the fire of the weapons by the assignment of sectors of fire and of approximate positions.

c. Where the frontage to be covered permits, antitank weapons are habitually employed in pairs. Such employment offers the best assurance that the loss or malfunction of a single gun will not completely deprive a sector of its antitank defense. The platoon leader assigns primary and secondary sectors of fire and fixes the conditions for opening fire.

d. Obstructions in the field of fire may require widely separated emplacements and squad fire control, even where frontage would not exclude employment in pairs.

e. The commander exercising fire control locates reference points extending over his entire sector and marking the limits of effective fire of the battalion antitank weapons (variable limits depending upon the type of enemy tank). These reference points delimit a zone beyond which a target will not be taken under fire. In the attack and in delaying action, wider limits may be assigned for fire on armored or scout cars and other similarly armored vehicles.

133. **Displacement.**—a. Displacement to new positions may be made by direction of the battalion commander or on the initiative of the platoon leader in accordance with the general instructions of the battalion commander.

b. Displacement during the attack frequently consists of successive movements from one position in readiness to another, from which they are prepared to go into firing positions in the zone of the attacking echelon and as close as possible to it.

c. The battalion commander may direct the displacement of the platoon to one or more general areas where positions will be occupied for the antitank protection of the attacking echelon, or he may direct the platoon to follow the attacking echelon by bounds. He may specify whether the platoon will move as a unit or by squads, and may assign one or more routes. He may utilize the platoon in general support of the battalion, or attach squads to, or place them in support of, designated rifle companies.

d. Where practicable and consistent with his mission. the platoon leader advances the platoon as a unit.

e. The platoon leaders instructions for displacement follow the standard five-paragraph form and should include:

Information of the enemy and of friendly supporting troops in the zone, especially tanks.

Mission of the platoon—to occupy designated firing positions or positions in readiness for the antitank protection of the attacking echelon.

Method of displacement—by platoon or by squad; simultaneously or by echelon.

Mission of each squad—to cover a designated sector or to protect a specified rifle company.

Route or routes to be followed.

Method of movement—whether on carts or by hand.

Proposed movement of platoon leader and the next place where they may receive orders from him.

f. When the infantry units advance from their assembly position and advance beyond close range, displacement of the antitank weapons to advanced positions becomes necessary. Antitank commanders, in liaison with rifle company commanders, make early provision for displacement to positions as close as possible to the leading rifle units. The platoon leader follows close behind the leading rifle companies and reconnoiters for new positions. He seeks to locate cover positions within close range of the attacking echelon from which the pieces can be moved into firing positions. Such positions may be found in, or close in rear of, the attacking echelon, if covered approaches are available. This will be

especially the case when the attacking echelon occupies a crest position or a position slightly in advance of a crest or other continuous line of cover.

g. As the rifle units advance to the assault, the antitank weapons should be well forward, usually within close range of the hostile position. On the delivery of the assault the weapons move into the lines of the rifle units, prepared for defense against mechanized counterattack. On the capture of objectives they immediately establish antitank security on the successive bases of fire.

SECTION 8

THE 81mm MORTAR PLATOON

BATTALION WEAPONS COMPANY

134. The 81mm Mortar Platoon, Composition and Armament.—a. The platoon is composed of a platoon headquarters and two mortar sections. Each mortar section contains a section headquarters, an ammunition squad, and two mortar squads. There are four 81mm mortars in the platoon. The strength of the platoon is two officers (one of whom is the battalion gas officer), and 74 enlisted.

b. The two lieutenants, gunnery sergeant, platoon sergeant, five sergeants, gunners, assistant gunners and lineman are armed with the carbine. The ammunition corporals, decontamination corporals, and squad leaders are armed with the Browning Automatic Rifle. The remainder of the platoon is armed with the rifle.

135. Characteristics.—The 81mm mortar combines mobility and power in a greater degree than any other supporting infantry weapon. Its projectiles have an explosive effect comparable to 75mm projectiles. The weapon can be manhandled for considerable distances without causing excessive fatigue of the crew. The maximum range of this mortar with light shell is 3,280 yards and with heavy shell, 1,280 yards. However due to the rapid falling off of accuracy at these extreme ranges and the limited observation under battle conditions the useful range of the 81mm mortar is about 2,000 yards with light shell and 1,000 yards with heavy shell for practical purposes. Due to its high trajectory, the mortar is capable of taking advantage of deep defilade and of exercising a wide choice in the selection of positions. It is habitually fired from masked positions. When under battalion control, it normally operates in a zone extending from 300 to 800 yards in rear of the leading troops. It has a rate of fire of 30-35 rounds per minute for a **short** period, and a **sustained** rate of 18 rounds per minute.

136. Mission and Responsibility.—a. The mission of the 81mm mortar platoon in the attack is to give close support to the rifle companies, especially to the rifle company making the main attack of the battalion. All other things are subordinate to this, the accomplishment of which requires the platoon leader, under the supervision of the commander of the weapons company, to keep his platoon in close touch with the assault companies. The mortar is the most effective supporting weapon available to the attacking battalion, and it must be employed boldly and aggressively. Because of the diversity of weapons assigned to the weapons company, the variation

in their tactical employment, and the necessity for the company commander to supervise operations over a deep and wide area, it is necessary to assign much responsibility to the commander of the mortar platoon. The mortars fire on definitely located point targets defiladed from the fire of flat trajectory weapons. Area targets requiring zone fires are artillery targets. The necessity of conserving ammunition supply demands careful discrimination of mortar targets from those pertaining to the machine guns on the one hand and the artillery on the other. Targets especially suited to mortar fire include targets located in road cuts, or behind railroad embankments, on reverse slopes, and intrenched heavy weapons.

b. The employment of mortars in support of a tank advance is exceptional. The hostile antitank weapons, revealing themselves by flashes or muzzle blast, are appropriate targets for flat-trajectory automatic weapons. Mortar fire against antitank weapons is ordinarily limited to preparatory fires, in conjunction with artillery, when ample ammunition is available.

c. Mortar fires are for the most part fires against personnel. The heavy shell is employed in destruction fires against enemy shelters and accessory defenses. Smoke shell is used to lay down a screen or to blind observation at a particular locality in enemy territory.

d. Mortars may be assigned missions supplementing artillery in preparatory fires.

e. Mortar fire shall not be placed closer than 200 yards to friendly troops.

137. **Duties of Leaders.**—a. Platoon Leader.—The platoon leader maintains contact with the company commander at all times in combat. He receives fire missions from him, and in the proper case, makes recommendations for the employment of his mortars. He distributes missions to the section leaders, reconnoiters and selects position areas when time permits, or directs reconnaissance by section leaders.

b. Second-in-command.—The second-in-command, a lieutenant, replaces the platoon leader if the latter becomes a casualty. He keeps himself informed of the tactical situation and takes charge of the platoon when the platoon leader is away on reconnaissance or other duty. He may control the fire of the platoon or of one section. He is also the battalion gas officer. As battalion gas officer he is the adviser to the battalion commander on the employment of chemicals against hostile installations. He is a technician in the proper employment and firing of chemicals. He assists the battalion intelligence officer in the instruction of the company gas noncommissioned officers, in defense against chemical attack, and in the decontamination of gassed areas.

c. Gunnery Sergeant.—The gunnery sergeant is the assistant to the platoon leader. He replaces an officer of the platoon if either becomes a casualty. He keeps himself informed of the tactical situation and takes charge of the platoon when the officers are away on other duty. He establishes the platoon command post, may act as platoon executive in the conduct of fire, and may control the fire of the platoon or of one section.

d. Platoon Sergeant.—The platoon sergeant is a section leader. He reconnoiters the position area assigned and indicates the approximate position for each mortar emplacement. He locates observation points which will permit each squad leader to observe the target areas or sector of fire for his mortar. Usually one of the squad observation posts will serve for the section leader. Where adequate observation near the mortar positions is not available, the section leader may elect to control the fire of the section himself and establish observation posts for control of both mortars.

e. Sergeant, Observer.—The sergeant, observer, assists the platoon commander on reconnaissance, and in preparing firing data. He establishes and supervises the operation of the platoon observation post.

f. Sergeant, Ammunition Squad.—The sergeant in each ammunition squad obtains ammunition from the battalion distributing point and delivers it to the mortar section, seeing that there is an adequate supply on hand at all times, especially prior to displacement. He is also a gas noncommissioned officer and should be trained in the use of chemicals (gas and smoke) and in the decontamination of gassed areas.

g. Squad Leader.—The squad leader controls the fire of his mortar and establishes an observation post that will permit him to observe fire on the target and to transmit his commands to the crew by voice or arm-and-hand signals. When assigned an approximate position, he fixes the exact location and directs the preparation of the emplacement (camouflage and intrenchment where required), and the movement of the mortar into position.

138. Approach March.—a. The platoon leader commands the platoon as a unit during the approach march. The development order of the company commander assigns the platoon leader his initial location, initial march objectives, and direction of advance.

b. When hostile fire compels deployment and movement forward by hand, the approach to the first firing position is made with the object of advancing with minimum casualties and in the shortest time. The platoon may be disposed with sections abreast or distributed in depth. Sections abreast is generally best adapted to rapid movement over open terrain or for passing crests or other conspicuous terrain lines. Dis-

490276 O - 42 - 9

tribution in depth is indicated when it is desired to take advantage of covered routes of advance or avoid obstacles. Dispositions are varied throughout the approach in accordance with changes in the terrain and in the situation. The formation for deployment is prescribed by the platoon leader, but it is the responsibility of squad leaders to maneuver their squads to take full advantage of the terrain.

c. Reconnaissance during the approach march is made to locate gassed and shelled areas and routes around them, to locate hasty positions, and to keep in touch with the situation to the front. The platoon leader does not remain in a fixed position with respect to the platoon. He precedes the platoon to select the best routes of advance and to determine suitable formations.

139. **Initial Reconnaissance and Organization of Base of Fire.**—a. When ordered to join the company commander, the platoon leader directs the second-in-command or the gunnery sergeant to move the platoon to the march objective already designated or to a position in readiness, and then joins the company command group. He executes such reconnaissance as may be directed by the company commander or as may be required as a basis for the organization of the battalion base of fire. He notes points of known or suspected hostile occupation, defiladed areas, and the dispositions of friendly rifle elements. Based on this reconnaissance, he determines the method of occupation of his position area.

b. The section leaders reconnoiter the assigned firing position areas and select an observation post affording the clearest field of view over the foreground of the position within midrange of the line of departure. On completion of their reconnaissance, the section leaders locate approximate mortar positions and call the mortar squads forward to their initial positions.

c. The squad leaders make the detailed reconnaissance for the exact location of the mortar emplacements.

140. **Firing Positions.**—a. The factors exercising the most influence on the location of firing positions include: location of targets and friendly front-line troops; requirements of cover and observation; fire direction by the company commander and the platoon leader; facility of ammunition supply.

b. In all cases, the mortar positions must be within effective range of the targets and afford observation of the targets and friendly troops from observation posts, which in turn, should be within arm-and-hand signalling distance from the emplacements. Exceptionally, the observation post may be removed at greater distances from the emplacements, and fire control exercised through wire communication by the platoon leader or by section leaders. **The limiting usable**

range to targets is 2,000 yards, with light shell and the distance to the front-line troops should not exceed 800 yards. The normal targets of the mortar are located within a zone of from 200 to 600 yards in front of the front-line troops. Smoke objectives may be considerably more distant.

c. As a rule, the mortars fire from fully defiladed positions. The characteristics of the piece, the difficulties of ammunition supply, and the weight of the ammunition practically exclude the occupation of open positions.

d. Mortar emplacements are separated from each other and from other critical installations (observation and command posts, other weapons emplacements, etc.) to avoid simultaneous destruction by a single shell. If practicable, each emplacement is so located as to be beyond the zone of dispersion of enemy projectiles directed on critical targets of enemy fire.

141. Mortar Observation Posts.—a. Observation is essential to the control of mortar fire. The location of the observation posts and the absolute necessity for continuous communication between the observer and the gunners control the locations of the firing positions of the mortars. Primary, alternate and supplementary observation posts are constructed whenever the situation permits.

b. It is essential that each observation post:

Permit the observer to see the target area and the assault troops being supported.

Be within visual signaling distance of the mortar position.

c. It is desirable that each observation post:

Afford the observer cover and concealment.

Be on the line between the mortar and the target.

142. Occupation of Position.—a. The squad leader directs the installation of the mortar in its firing position, the camouflage of the piece and its emplacement, and the adoption or construction of cover for the piece and the crew.

b. In the occupation of the observation post, care is taken to avoid movement and exposure that would attract hostile attention and fire.

143. Assignment of Suitable Targets.—a. As the ammunition supply for the 81mm mortars is usually limited, due to its weight and the difficulty of transporting extra supplies in the attack situation, targets must be selected with great care and discrimination. All mortar fire is plunging fire and due to the considerable time of flight of the shell from the mortar to the target at usual ranges, rapidly moving targets are not, as a rule suitable.

b. Suitable missions for the sections of the mortar platoon in attack are:

(1) Definitely located enemy machine guns, antitank guns, and observation posts.

(2) Areas in which enemy machine guns, mortars, accompanying artillery or antitank guns are known to be located.

(3) To fire on the known or probable enemy local mobile reserves located on reverse slopes and in woods.

(4) Defiladed routes likely to be used by the enemy in making a counterattack when a counterattack is imminent.

(5) To supplement the fire of artillery by firing on defiladed areas and in woods.

(6) To smoke critical enemy areas in support of infantry attacks when the smoke mission is more important than normal support fires. Approximately one sixth of the ammunition supply of the mortars is W.P. smoke. This ratio may be varied as necessary. It is used to blind hostile observation and fire just prior to the assault, to cover the movement of pioneers moving forward to demolish obstacles along the enemy front, and to screen the movements of our own troops. Wind direction and velocity must be favorable before smoke missions can be effective.

(7) To fire chemical shell upon enemy areas if such missions are required, as there are no longer any chemical mortars in the regiment.

c. Hostile machine guns always have priority when several types of mortar targets are available.

d. **Close support of the assaulting echelon is paramount.**

144. **Fire Direction and Control.**—a. As a general rule, most effective results are obtained by the surprise concentration, in respect to both time and place, of the fire of both mortars of a section. In some situations it may be advantageous to prepare data for the concentration of the fires of the platoon on certain targets. Usually the requirements of cover and the necessity for providing mortar support at different places in the battalion zone make platoon concentrations impracticable. Mortars are not emplaced in battery to perform artillery missions.

b. Whenever practicable, the company commander designates the target areas and fixes conditions for opening fire. When, as the result of restricted visibility or unusual extension of the battalion front, the fire of the mortars cannot be directed by the company commander, the battalion commander attaches the mortars either by squad or by section to one or more rifle companies of the leading echelon. In such cases the rifle company commander directs the fire of the 81mm as prescribed for the 60mm mortar.

c. The mortar platoon leader maintains close liaison with artillery observers in the battalion zone and seeks to combine his fire with those of the supporting artillery and the action of the leading rifle echelon.

d. The mortar squad is the basic fire unit. The section leader, or occasionally the platoon leader, may control the fire of either a section or the platoon by the liaison method, using a forward observer. This method finds especial application in the organization of battalion fire bases. Usually, squad leaders exercise fire-control functions. The section leader directs the fire of the squads by the assignment of sectors of fire or target areas and indication of the order or priority of fires. His instructions should be given while the section is still assembled. During periods when the squads are separated by displacement, both squads may be assigned identical fire missions. Squad leaders regulate their fire action so as to support the general plan of action of the battalion.

e. When attacking weak resistance or enemy elements dispersed by attack, and when battalion fire bases are not organized, the mortars are usually put into action by attachment to rifle companies or by the assignment of missions in support of a particular rifle company.

145. Platoon Leader's Order.—If possible, the platoon leader's order should be issued to his subordinates where the sectors of fire or the target areas can be observed. It follows the standard five-paragraph form and should include the following items: Orientation, Situation, Mission of the Platoon, Missions of Sections—Target areas, Ranges—Rates and kind of fire, Time of opening fire—Amount of ammunition, Conduct of fire, Special communication arrangements—signals, Location of aid station and ammunition distributing point, Location of platoon observation post, Position of Platoon Leader or his movements.

146. Conduct of the Attack.—a. Mortar fire is opened at a time prescribed by the weapons company commander. It ceases or lifts either at a prearranged signal, at a designated time, or when observation indicates that friendly troops are endangered. All signals must be known and arranged in advance. Squad leaders and gunners are always on the alert to cease firing in the absence of signals if necessary.

b. When not moving, the mortars are always either in position, firing, or are ready to fire.

c. During the attack, the platoon leader observes and controls the fire of his platoon, keeps in touch with the tactical situation, continually observes for new targets, replaces casualties, and supervises the ammunition supply. He notifies the weapons company commander when observation of the targets or of the attacking echelon becomes inadequate.

147. Displacement.—a. Displacement is so regulated as to cause as little interruption as possible in the continuity of mortar support. In particular, displacement is avoided during any period when the leading rifle echelon is in movement.

b. The situation determines whether the platoon should displace as a unit or by section echelons. The latter method is usual when continuity of mortar support must be maintained. The section displaces as a unit or by squad echelons, depending on the situation and the method of distribution of platoon fire missions. Unit displacement is indicated in cases where sections have been assigned identical fire missions or where maintenance of continuity in mortar support is not required.

c. Displacement by squad echelons is essential where sections have been assigned separate fire missions and continuity in the section fire support must be maintained. Displacements are best effected during lulls in action and when movement and fire attack are not immediately contemplated.

d. Displacement is executed either in conjunction with a general displacement of the battalion base of fire or as an independent operation. Regardless of the action of other elements of the weapons company, the mortars are displaced when they can no longer carry out their missions on the battalion fire base.

e. The movement of the mortars in a battalion fire base displacement is regulated by the company commander. Reconnaissance of the new base is carried out under his direction by the reconnaissance officer and personnel from the command group. Based on this reconnaissance the company commander assigns a new position area to the platoon. The company commander may order the independent displacement of the platoon to a new position area when notified by the platoon leader that observation of its targets or of the attacking echelon has become deficient. In either case the company commander indicates the new position areas to be occupied, and, when practicable, the fire missions to be executed.

f. The platoon leader determines the formation to be used and whether to move the platoon as a unit or by section echelons. He checks the ammunition supply assuring himself that there is an adequate supply on hand and informs the gunnery sergeant of the mission of that part of the platoon, if any, which remains behind. He also informs him when to bring it forward. Then, accompanied by the sergeant, observer, and a messenger, he moves forward for the reconnaissance of the new position area and the most favorable route thereto for the displacement of the sections. He locates the approximate section position areas and sends back the messenger to guide them to the new positions. The platoon leader and the sergeant, observer, prepare fires prior to the arrival of the sections.

148. **Coordination with Rifle Units.**—a. When the mortars are emplaced in the areas of the front-line companies, the platoon leader and, in the proper case, the section or squad leaders, establish contact with local infantry commanders and acquaint themselves with their situation and intentions. In all cases they endeavor to regulate their fires in accordance with the situation and action of the rifle units. In particular, they intensify their fires at the moment of assault or on discovery of hostile assembly for counterattack.

b. Mortar fire ceases or lifts either at a prearranged signal, at a designated hour, or on the initiative of the mortar unit leaders when observation indicates that further fire will endanger friendly troops. Mortars then take under fire defiladed areas in rear of the leading hostile troops where enemy heavy weapons are emplaced or where hostile forces attempt to assemble for counterattack.

c. Signals prearranged with the infantry must be known by all leaders in advance.

149. **Consolidation of Captured Position.**—During consolidation of a captured position, mortars are placed in position to cover the battalion sector and its flanks. They fire upon hostile machine guns, enemy counterattacks, and defiladed routes of hostile approach which cannot be covered by other weapons of the battalion, or artillery fire.

150. **Ammunition.**—Time permitting, ammunition is assembled on each gun position. Mortars must arrive in all firing positions with sufficient ammunition to commence firing and to support the assault echelon. An empty mortar is useless; take the time to replenish the ammunition supply before moving forward. The platoon leader is responsible for informing the weapons company commander of the status of his ammunition supply, and for requesting any necessary help. Approximately one sixth of the ammunition furnished is W.P. smoke; the remainder is H.E. shell. Ammunition is placed in small piles convenient to each mortar, so that one hostile shell can destroy only one pile.

SECTION 9

THE MACHINE-GUN PLATOON

BATTALION WEAPONS COMPANY

155. The Machine-Gun Platoon, Composition and Armament.—a. There are three machine-gun platoons in the Battalion Weapons Company. Each platoon contains a platoon headquarters and two sections.

b. Platoon headquarters contains the following personnel:

1 Lieutenant, platoon leader.
1 Platoon Sergeant, second-in-command.
2 Corporals, (one ammunition, one instrument).
6 Privates and Privates First Class including;
2 Messengers and signalmen.
2 Observers.
2 Other duty.

c. Each machine-gun section consists of a section leader and two squads. The section leader is a sergeant. Each squad contains a corporal squad leader; a gunner; an assistant gunner; and six privates or privates first class for ammunition and supply.

d. Each squad is equipped with one .30 caliber, heavy machine gun; making a total of four guns in each platoon, and twelve guns in the company. There are twelve additional guns which can be obtained for use in stabilized defense or as replacements.

e. The platoon leader and each noncommissioned officer, with the exception of the ammunition corporal, is armed with the carbine or pistol. The gunners and assistant gunners are also armed with the carbine or pistol. The remainder of the platoon is armed with the rifle.

THE SQUAD AND SECTION

156. General.—a. When operating as a part of the platoon, the platoon leader gives orders to the squad and section. When they are attached to another unit, orders are given by the commander of the unit to which they are attached.

b. The .30 caliber heavy machine gun weighs about 92 pounds and cannot keep up with the riflemen in fast moving situations. The distinctive noise of firing, muzzle blast, high silhouette and vulnerability of the crew to hostile fire make it exceedingly difficult to operate the gun on or close to the front line. Unless emplaced on commanding ground, its flat trajectory makes it difficult to fire over the heads of

friendly troops except at distant targets. These characteristics to a great extent determine the tactical use of the gun in the attack. They generally fire from a flank until their fire endangers friendly troops, and then either place overhead fires on distant targets or displace forward. They are better suited for defensive missions than for offensive missions, but, when skillfully employed, they render extremely valuable support to assault units. Only as a last resort should they be located on or close to the front line.

c. It should be noted that the light machine guns, now furnished all rifle companies, are sufficiently mobile to keep up with their rifle units and give them close support by firing through gaps in the line and across the front of attacking riflemen. These light guns are seldom used for long-range overhead missions.

157. Duties of Leaders.—a. The section leader is the instructor of his section. He conducts his section in approach march and displacement as prescribed for the rifle squad. In combat, he exercises the functions of fire control in all cases where the section is assigned a sector of fire by the platoon leader.

b. The squad leader is responsible for the execution of the fire orders of the section leader and for the fire discipline of the squad. When assigned an approximate position by the section leader, he fixes the exact location and directs the preparation and occupation of the gun position, camouflage and intrenchment where required, and the movement of the gun into position. He instructs the members of his squad in their duties and supervises their conduct in battle.

158. Route March.—The section may march as a part of its platoon in the Weapons Company, or distributed throughout the column for antiaircraft protection. At all halts they occupy firing positions off the road and protect the column against hostile aircraft attack.

159. Approach March.—a. Until the battalion occupies an assembly area, the mission of the section is the same as for route march.

b. When the battalion occupies an assembly area, the machine guns are usually placed on commanding ground around the perimeter of the area, about 1,000 yards out, for antiaircraft protection. They must be able to assemble at once to accompany the battalion forward.

c. When marching with rifle units the formation of machine-gun units is conformed to that of the rifle units to conceal their identity from hostile observation and avoid drawing the intensive fire usually directed at machine-gun units when they are isolated and identified as such by hostile forces.

160. Movement into Position.—a. The section leader precedes his section to receive the platoon leaders order. Upon receipt of this order the section leader arranges for his squad leaders to come forward to receive his order. He then reconnoiters for a cover position, an observation post and primary and alternate gun positions for each squad before the squad leaders arrive.

b. The observation post selected should afford a good view of the targets or sector of fire of the section also the supported troops and their route of advance to the first position where the fire of the section is masked, either by the assault troops being supported, or by terrain features. Concealment for the observation post and gun positions is always desirable but not always available.

c. On arrival of the section the section leader directs it to the cover position and assembles the squad leaders near the observation post, orients them on the ground and issues his order. This order follows the standard five paragraph form and includes the situation, the mission of the section, gun positions, targets and ranges to them and the preparatory fire order, omitting only the final fire order which is not usually given until both guns are actually in position.

Except in an emergency, one gun should not open fire and draw hostile fire before the other gun is in position.

d. The squad leaders reconnoiter the areas designated by the section leader and select therefrom the exact gun positions from which fire on the targets assigned can best be delivered, with due regard for concealment and speed in getting the gun into action. If the position selected is an open one it should be occupied with all possible speed, regardless of concealment.

161. Gun Positions.—a. Primary and alternate positions are selected for each gun. In the selection of these positions, consideration is given to the mission assigned, fields of fire, safety of the gun and its crew, the time available, observation of targets or target area, routes of approach from the rear, and routes for displacement forward.

b. The controlling factor in the selection of gun positions is good observation of targets or target areas, and good observation of supported troops. The best location is on commanding ground sited for overhead fire or fire through gaps between assault units.

c. Gun emplacements are sufficiently separated to prevent the destruction of more than one gun by a single shell. Guns of the section are always within hailing or arm-and-hand signalling distance. This distance will usually vary from 30 to 50 yards. When occupying open positions the guns should be separated by at least 50 yards.

162. Fire Control and Discipline.—a. In the attack, the section is the basic fire unit. The guns are usually employed by sections in positions from which both guns can cover the same targets or sectors of fire.

b. In masked positions, the fire of the section is ordinarily controlled from a platoon observation post under the direction of the platoon leader. The section leader executes the orders of the platoon leader, posts himself at or near the gun emplacements, checks the laying and sight setting, regulates the expenditure of ammunition, and otherwise supervises discipline. He directs squad leaders as to the supplementary open positions designated by the platoon leader for occupation in emergency and the sectors of fire for each gun. He informs them of the signals to be used for the occupation of such positions. In emergency, he engages targets from supplementary positions on his own initiative.

In this connection it should be noted that the section leader, or even the squad leader, may be given standing permission to move from primary positions to alternate positions on his own initiative, reporting such movement to his immediate superior. Movement from primary or alternate positions into a supplementary position usually involves the abandonment of one mission in favor of another mission, and thus must be executed only on the orders of the platoon leader or higher authority. As the fires of our machine guns invite hostile retaliatory fires directed upon the positions thus disclosed, prompt movement into alternate positions should be **automatic** after firing from a primary position.

c. In open positions the sections cannot be placed close enough together to permit control by the platoon leader, thus each section is usually assigned a sector of fire. The section leader then controls the fire of the section, designates reference points and order of fires, announces range and class of fire (fixed, traversing, searching), targets, fixes ammunition expenditure for each fire, and regulates the opening of fire.

163. Displacement.—a. The machine-gun section is displaced as a unit to new locations. The section moves either to position areas designated by the platoon leader or to an area reconnoitered and selected by the section leader on orders received from the platoon leader.

b. In displacements to masked positions, the section leader conducts his section to position areas designated by the platoon leader.

c. Displacements to open positions where fire control by the platoon leader will be impracticable are usually preceded by reconnaissance by the section leader. Before initiating a displacement, the section leader is informed as to the targets, target area, or sector which his section will cover in the new position. He moves forward to the general area to

be occupied, observes the location of the front line troops and enemy activity, and locates an observation post and approximate gun positions from which the targets, target areas, or sectors assigned to the section can be observed and taken under fire. He locates a cover position in close proximity to the firing positions to which he directs the movement of the section in accordance with prearranged plans, and where he gives instructions to the squads for the occupation of the gun positions and the preparation of fire.

THE PLATOON

164. Duties of Command Group.—a. The Platoon Leader, a lieutenant, leads the platoon as a unit or by section echelons in the approach march; exercises the functions of fire direction by the assignment of targets, target areas, or sectors of fire, and firing position areas. In masked positions, he controls the fire of the platoon by designating targets, fixing the number of rounds for each fire, and giving commands or signals for opening fire. He directs the movement into alternate or supplementary positions and controls displacement.

b. The Platoon Sergeant is second-in-command and the assistant to the platoon leader. In movement he brings up the rear of the platoon, checks straggling, and follows the rearmost echelon of the platoon to new locations. He keeps constantly in touch with the situation to the rear and on the flanks of the platoon.

c. The Instrument Corporal has charge of fire control equipment, assists the platoon leader in setting up firing data, installs the platoon observation post and supervises its operation, serves as a member of the reconnaissance detail in reconnaissance of positions and in displacements.

165. Mission.—a. The mission of the heavy machine-gun platoon in the attack is primarily to support the advance and maneuver of the attacking rifle units. This mission is usually accomplished by the performance of one of the following assignments.

(1) In direct support of a designated rifle unit.
(2) Attached to a designated rifle unit.
(3) In general support of the battalion by:
    (a) Furnishing flank protection.
    (b) Furnishing antiaircraft protection.
    (c) Assisting the advance of the rifle units.

b. Until the AA-AT platoon of the weapons company is supplied with a dual purpose antiaircraft-antitank weapon, instead of the present equipment which is suitable only against tanks, the duty of furnishing antiaircraft protection falls upon the machine-gun platoons. On the march and in bivouac

all machine guns of the company may have antiaircraft missions. During the approach march and the attack, the guns of one section of each platoon take position for antiaircraft fires when not engaged in the execution of ground missions. The ground mission has priority over all antiaircraft missions; machine guns do not allow themselves to be diverted from ground missions by aerial attack. The assault companies in an attack are usually in a dispersed formation and in motion, and will not need active antiaircraft protection by the machine guns. However, the weapons emplaced on the base of fire, units moving to the attack, and reserve companies offer more concentrated targets. They will therefore need active protection against enemy aircraft; .30 caliber heavy machine guns may expect assignment to such missions.

166. **Approach March and Deployment.**—a. A machine-gun platoon operates either alone or as part of the company. So long as the weapons company remains intact, the platoon leader maintains control of his command and keeps it in its proper place in the company formation. When the platoon is attached to a rifle unit during the approach march, its location in the formation will usually be prescribed by the commander of the unit to which attached. In order to get the platoon forward with a minimum of losses the platoon leader varies its formation in conformity with available cover and the nature of the hostile fire. When the front of the weapons company is extended so that the platoons advance along separate routes, each platoon leader selects his own route of advance under general instructions from the company commander and determines the distance at which his platoon is to follow the rifle companies.

b. The development order of the company commander assigns the platoon its initial location and march objective; direction of advance; general protective ground missions; whether dispositions should be taken for uncovered approach; and specific antiaircraft missions.

c. The platoon may be disposed with sections abreast or distributed in depth. Distribution with sections abreast is generally best adapted to rapid movement over open terrain. Distribution in depth is indicated when it is desired to take advantage of covered routes of advance or to avoid obstacles.

d. Dispositions are varied throughout the approach in accordance with changes in the nature of the terrain and the situation.

e. In critical situations, it will frequently be necessary to advance by section echelons and by bounds, in an advanced state of readiness for action.

f. During an echeloned advance, the platoon leader, by personal observation and the use of the personnel of his command group, maintains constant surveillance over the

route of advance and areas of possible enemy interruption. He takes post where he can observe and direct the movement of his leading element. When necessary, he posts observers in key observation points so as to cover the entire zone of advance of the platoon and the terrain on the flanks.

g. The platoon leader usually controls the direction of advance by designating the command group as the base unit and directing its movements. He reconnoiters especially for crossings over terrain features creating obstacles for the platoon. Two men are detailed as antiaircraft and antitank lookouts. Measures are taken for the passage of a defile as directed by the company commander.

h. Cover, especially when carts are used, is very desirable and platoons follow the best concealed routes available. Until the front has been cleared of hostile detachments, a platoon does not usually advance from a concealed or defiladed position. When the rifle units have determined the next position in front is not occupied by the enemy the machine-gun platoon moves forward. It thus follows the rifle units by a series of bounds and is always ready to assist them in the attack. When hostile fire and lack of cover make it inadvisable to continue the advance with carts, the platoon must carry its equipment by hand, using formations and methods similar to those of a rifle platoon. When advancing on the exposed flank of a battalion, the platoon is so conducted that it can quickly go into position to protect that flank.

167. Reconnaissance.—a. Upon summons by the company commander, the platoon leader directs the platoon sergeant to move the platoon to the approach objective already designated or to a position in readiness, and, accompanied by the instrument corporal and a messenger, joins the company command group.

b. There the platoon commander receives orders from the company commander or from higher authority which include the following:

Information of the enemy and of our own troops, including the battalion plan of attack; assembly positions, objectives, and lines of departure assigned to the leading rifle companies; whether tanks are to lead the attack.

Battalion base of fire, including position areas and missions of mortars; missions and position areas of the machine guns.

Primary and secondary fire missions assigned the platoons; general position area; sector of fire or target areas; priorities of fire; hour, signal, or other arrangements for opening fire, especially when machine gun preparation fires are to be conducted.

Allotments of ammunition for specific missions; general arrangements for ammunition and water replacement.

Communications within the company; whether or not a central company control station is to be set up; location of the company and battalion command posts.

When the company order has been completed, the platoon leader sends a messenger to the platoon sergeant directing the platoon to a location near the initial positions. He then goes on reconnaissance, accompanied by the instrument corporal and a messenger.

c. If attached to, or given the mission of supporting, a particular rifle company, the platoon leader contacts the rifle company commander and learns from him the situation, his plans for the attack, and his desires regarding machine-gun support. He then reconnoiters for targets, gun positions, and routes into the positions. He tests for the safety of friendly troops at each possible position. He considers methods of engaging targets and decides upon approximate gun positions. He orders the instrument corporal to obtain ranges to the various targets and to install the platoon observation post. He sends a message to the platoon telling the section leaders where to report for orders and what equipment to bring forward.

d. Upon completion of the above, he formulates his order.

168. Orders.—a. When the platoon is operating as part of the weapons company it receives its orders from the company commander of that company. When it is attached to another organization the orders of the platoon will be received from the commander of the unit to which attached.

b. Orders from higher authority to the platoon, as well as the platoon leader's order to his platoon, will usually be oral. The order to the platoon follows the standard five-paragraph form and should include:

Information of the enemy and of our own troops.

Assignment of the platoon for combat.

Area to be occupied.

Fire orders or instructions which include missions of sections, targets, ranges, rate and kind of fire, time of opening fire, and the amount of ammunition.

Location of command posts and observation posts.

c. After completing the order to the section leaders the platoon leader will acquaint the platoon sergeant with the situation, and tell him where to establish the platoon command post. He then gives orders to the messenger agent, (the messenger agent is the machine-gun platoon representative to the supported rifle company), and directs the disposition of the platoon transport if it is under his command.

169. Fire Direction and Control.—a. Whenever practicable, the platoon leader controls the fire of the platoon guns. He

locates the approximate gun positions, assigns targets, fixes ammunition expenditures, and gives commands or signals for opening fire. Otherwise, he exercises the functions of fire direction by assignment of target areas or fire sectors to the section leaders, who then exercise fire control functions.

b. In masked positions, the platoon leader usually exercises fire control functions. However, wide separation of the sections or difficulties of communication may require delegation of these functions to section leaders.

c. In open positions, delegation of fire control functions to section leaders is usually necessary. However, crest positions affording ample cover in their immediate rear may make possible platoon fire control as for masked positions. In this case, gun crews and weapons remain in cover positions until ordered to occupy fire positions by the platoon leader.

d. As a general rule, most effective results are obtained by the surprise concentration of prearranged fires of all machine guns of the platoon, executed on order of the platoon leader. These fires should take the enemy by surprise in both time and place of delivery. Such prearrangement of fires takes some time, as ranges must be calculated after the target is selected, and the fire of all four guns must be coordinated. The platoon leader must decide between a surprise concentration of prearranged fires, slightly delayed, or immediate fires from individual guns or sections. In such cases the platoon commander fixes the number of rounds to be fired; usually in bursts of 6 to 20 rounds from each gun.

e. Observers posted from the platoon command group maintain continuous observation over the platoon sector or target area. They select key terrain features as reference points and determine range and other firing data to facilitate the engagement of targets of opportunity appearing in the field of fire.

f. The platoon observation post should be close enough to the gun positions for easy transmission of orders by arm-and-hand signals. Where the platoon occupies masked positions, the observation post is ordinarily on the mask (crest or other commanding terrain feature) or other nearby commanding feature. It should permit continuous observation of the location and movements of the attacking echélon and the fire sector or target areas assigned to the platoon. Supplementary posts may be established for observation on the flanks and for antiaircraft warning missions under the direction of the platoon sergeant.

170. Conduct of the Attack.—a. The platoon leader surveys the proposed zone of advance of rifle units and seeks to establish an initial safety limit for fire so as to engage targets opposing the advance of the leading echelon; overhead fire can seldom be placed closer than 400 yards in front

490276 O - 42 - 10

of advancing rifle troops. As soon as practicable, the platoon leader establishes a second safety limit for his fires, to become effective when the rifle units have become closely engaged. He fixes a danger zone in front of his machine guns and, when necessary, posts sentinels or takes other measures to prevent personnel from passing its limits. Where the attack of rifle units is launched within midrange of the hostile position (400 to 600 yards), the flat trajectory of the machine guns usually makes direct fire upon forward enemy elements impracticable because of the danger of hitting our own troops. Therefore, in such cases, the initial machine-gun targets are normally rear elements which might endanger the attacking echelon, such as heavy weapons, unarmored vehicles, and counterattacking troops disclosing themselves within the machine-gun field of fire. Reverse slopes in the immediate rear of the initial attack objective, known or suspected to be occupied by hostile reserves, may be subjected to searching fire.

b. The platoon leader habitually employs his platoon as a unit, using overhead fire against targets in the initial attack objective or in the depth of the enemy dispositions, direct fires through gaps in the line of riflemen, or longrange fires against targets in the zone of an adjacent unit. Data are prepared to each key point or enemy area that is visible from the platoon observation post and is suspected of containing hostile supports (weapons or troops). Targets are engaged when disclosed by enemy movements or fire.

171. **Flank Protection.**—Flank protection missions are habitually accomplished from supplementary direct fire positions. These missions become of exceptional importance when the advance of the battalion creates an exposed flank. The platoon leader maintains constant observation of the situation on the flank of the battalion as well as the location of the attacking echelon. He reconnoiters positions for flank protection fires whenever the battalion offers an exposed flank, with especial regard to enemy areas especially favorable for launching a counterattack.

172. **Masked and Open Positions.**—Whenever platoons occupy masked primary positions, the platoon leader selects for use in emergency open alternate and supplementary positions and sectors of fire covering hostile approaches to primary gun positions. Section leaders are informed of the location of these positions, the signal for occupation of same, and the method of surveillance of emergency sectors. Usually one observer in the platoon observation post is assigned this duty. If this is impracticable, section leaders may be directed to maintain their own surveillance of emergency sectors.

173. **Ammunition Supply**—a. The platoon leader, under the supervision of the weapons company commander, or under the supervision of rifle company commander to which the

platoon is attached, is responsible for maintaining adequate supplies of ammunition at the guns.

b. Therefore wherever practicable the platoon leaders retain control of the platoon carts delegating immediate supervision of the platoon supply to the platoon ammunition corporal.

c. Squads take care of their own supply of ammunition and water, carrying them forward when the carts are unloaded. When the distance to the carts is great and there is only one covered route of approach, section leaders combine the carriers of both squads into a single ammunition supply detail. In this manner belts are loaded and ammunition is brought forward to a point convenient to both squads. This supply detail may be combined and operate under supervision of the platoon ammunition corporal.

d. During the attack, the platoon leader continually observes and controls the fire of the platoon, keeps in touch with the situation to his front and flanks, observes for new targets, replaces casualties, and supervises supply.

174. Communication.—a. The platoon has two messengers. One accompanies the instrument corporal when he goes to the company CP or to a supported rifle company. When the instrument corporal is not available, an observer is used in his place. The remaining messenger stays with the platoon leader for communication purposes between the platoon and the company, or between the platoon and the sections.

b. Communication is also conducted by voice and by arm-and-hand signals.

175. Anticipating Displacement.—a. When the platoon is in support of a particular rifle company and it appears that the objective will soon be taken, the platoon leader anticipates the opportunity for displacement and issues orders to be executed later **on signal.** Such orders generally provide: that he will go forward to a certain area; that one or both sections go out of action and follow him on signal; the route to be taken; and if one section remains in position, its mission, arrangement for forward displacement, and method of displacement.

b. If the platoon is not in support of a particular rifle company, the platoon leader notifies the company commander when it appears that from present positions his fire will soon be masked due to lack of observation or on account of safety. He will then recommend new positions from which his assigned missions can be carried out.

176. Displacement.—a. Displacement is effected upon the orders of the weapons company commander unless the platoon is attached to or is supporting a particular rifle company. When the company commander controls displacement, the

platoon leader will be given instructions concerning new position areas the same as for the occupation of initial positions. If the platoon is in support of, or attached to, a particular rifle company, the platoon leader notifies the company commander that he is displacing forward and informs him of the new location of his platoon.

b. In either case the platoon leader issues orders to be executed later on signal. He then gives the signal for the movement to commence; moves forward rapidly taking the instrument corporal with him; meets the rifle company commander or the observer, near the new location and learns the new situation and location of new targets; reconnoiters for gun positions, testing for safety of friendly troops at each possible location; considers the method of engaging targets and decides upon the gun positions; orders the instrument corporal to obtain ranges and set up the platoon observation post; and orders the advance section into position. When one section is already in position, the platoon leader signals or orders the rear section forward and takes the necessary action to place it in firing position quickly upon its arrival.

c. In general the duties of the platoon leader and his headquarters group, preparatory to, during and immediately after a displacement forward, follow the same routine as is outlined for the initial reconnaissance and movement into position. At this stage of the attack however the platoon leader has been observing the ground to the front for some time, has observed the advance of the supported rifle companies and the retirement of enemy resistance and is in possession of more information of the situation than was available initially and will therefore exercise more initiative in conducting the displacement forward. As a rule the orders of the weapons company commander or the rifle company commander in case the platoon is attached to that unit will allow the platoon leader considerable latitude as to the method of displacement, routes of advance and new gun positions. The method and route together with new gun positions selected must provide for covering fire for the squad, section or platoon displacing forward from other machine gun units still in position and for the minimum reduction or interruption of supporting fire for the advancing rifle units.

177. **Reorganization or Consolidation of Positions.**—a. When an attack has stopped and the rifle troops are being reorganized or the objective has been captured and the new position is being consolidated, the machine-gun platoon will be used to protect the front line rifle troops from hostile ground and aerial attacks.

b. Regardless of whether it is operating alone or as part of the company, whether it is in direct support of a rifle company, attached to a rifle company or in general support

of the battalion, the protection of the rifle troops from ground or aerial attack during these times becomes the paramount mission of the machine guns.

c. It is the responsibility of the battalion commander to issue instructions for the movement of the heavy machine guns under these circumstances. However, in emergencies and in the absence of orders from higher authority, the platoon leader may issue orders to change the location of his guns on his own responsibility, reporting any such changes to his company commander.

178. TROOP LEADING—THE MACHINE GUN PLATOON IN ATTACK

The following is listed as a general guide for the actions of the platoon leader of a machine gun platoon in a normal attack situation. Variations will often be required.

SITUATION

Weapons company commander issues his order to the assembled machine gun platoon leaders, each of whom is accompanied, or has close by, his instrument corporal and available messengers. Platoons are with the company, probably in the battalion assembly area, with platoon sergeants in charge of platoons.

Company order is completed.

ACTIONS OF PLATOON LEADER

Sends message to platoon sergeant directing him to move the platoon to a point near the initial positions, and indicating time and place for section leaders to report to him.

Goes on reconnaissance accompanied by his instrument corporal and messengers.

Contacts rifle company commander (if in direct support or attached) to learn plan of rifle company and their desires for machine gun support.

Continues reconnaissance for (1) targets, (2) routes, (3) positions, and (4) methods of engaging targets.

Sends one or more messengers to rifle company CP for liaison. (If in direct support or attached.)

Formulates order.

OTHER ACTIONS

Instrument corporal determines ranges.

Platoon sergeant conducts platoon to designated point.

Section leaders proceed to point designated to report to platoon leader.

SITUATION

Section leaders have reported to platoon leader.

ACTIONS OF PLATOON LEADER

Issues order to section leaders at a point where target area and section positions are visible. This order includes:

(1) Information of the situation.

(2) Mission of platoon.

(3) Detailed instructions to sections as to targets, positions, time of opening and lifting fire, and method and route of approach.

(4) Possible future actions.

(5) Location for carts.

(6) Location of platoon ammunition distributing point, battalion ammunition distributing point, and instructions for ammunition supply.

(7) Location of battalion aid station.

(8) Location of CP of platoon and of weapons company.

SITUATION

Platoon order completed.

ACTIONS OF PLATOON LEADER

Checks position of carts for concealment, accessibility.

Observes movement of sections.

OTHER ACTIONS

Section leaders summon squad leaders.

Squad unload equipment and bring it forward.

Ammunition corporal takes empty carts to be refilled.

Section leaders reconnoiter and select exact gun positions.

Section leaders obtain firing data.

Section leaders issue orders, to include information of the situation, mission, gun positions, and targets. May issue fire order now or later.

Section leaders check safety angles if overhead fire is ordered.

SITUATION

Gun squads are occupying positions.

ACTIONS OF PLATOON LEADER

Supervises occupation and checks ammunition chain.

Sends message to weapons company commander to notify him that guns are in position and their location. This messenger remains at the weapons company CP.

OTHER ACTIONS

Platoon sergeant establishes ammunition chain.

Section leaders supervise occupation of positions.

SITUATION

Attack has commenced.

ACTIONS OF PLATOON LEADER

Observes and controls fire.

Keeps informed of the situation.

Continually observes for new targets.

Replaces casualties.

Supervises ammunition supply.

OTHER ACTIONS

Platoon sergeant assists platoon leader and keeps him advised as to ammunition supply.

Instrument corporal assists platoon leader in observation of the front.

Section leaders control fire; locate and engage new targets in emergency.

Ammunition corporal obtains ammunition replacement and maintains supply chain.

SITUATION

Action progressing favorably. It appears that the objective will soon be taken.

ACTIONS OF PLATOON LEADER

Anticipates opportunity for displacement.

Issues order to be executed later on signal. This order includes (1) that he will go forward on reconnaissance, (2) which section will go forward first, (3) route, (4) whether carts will be used, (5) approximate area of the new positions, (6) if a section remains, its mission and arrangements for its moving forward.

SITUATION

Progress of assault units permits displacement forward.

Fire from present positions masked or about to be masked.

ACTIONS OF PLATOON LEADER

Notifies weapons company commander that he is displacing forward to (location if possible).

Gives signal for the movement to begin.

Moves forward with speed, accompanied by his instrument corporal and available messengers.

Meets commander of the rifle company supported, or messenger, near the new positions.

Learns situation and new targets.

Reconnoiters.

Meets advance section.

Places advance section in new position, issuing the necessary orders.

OTHER ACTIONS

Instrument corporal determines range.

Section leader of advance section puts section into action.

Rear section continues on assigned mission.

SITUATION

Advance section in new positions, firing.

ACTIONS OF PLATOON LEADER

Signals or orders rear section forward.

OTHER ACTION

Rear section moves forward under platoon sergeant.

SECTION 10

THE BATTALION WEAPONS COMPANY

181. The Battalion Weapons Company, Composition and Armament.—a. The Battalion Weapons Company is composed of a company headquarters, an AA and AT platoon, an 81mm mortar platoon, and three machine-gun platoons. These platoons are organized and equipped as shown in sections 7, 8, and 9 (paragraphs 121, 134, and 155) of this text.

b. The company headquarters is composed of a command group, consisting of the personnel necessary for the coordination and control of the company in action, and an administration and supply group.

182. Characteristics.—The weapons company is the fourth lettered company of each infantry battalion (Co. D, H, or M) and comprises the supporting and antitank weapons of the battalion. It is combined under one commander for administrative and training purposes. The antitank platoon is included in the composition of the weapons company for the purposes of supply, administration, and technical training only. The tactical missions of the antitank platoon are assigned by the battalion commander and are executed under his immediate direction or that of the commander of the unit at whose disposition it may be placed by the battalion commander. Decision as to the tactical use of the three different types of platoons comprising this company rests with the battalion commander. The weapons company is capable of little or no independent action. It cannot take ground and it cannot hold ground indefinitely without the assistance of rifle units. Machine guns and mortars act by fire alone; so the weapons of the company are employed to support the action of or to protect the riflemen.

183. Command Group.—The command group serves in the forward echelon of the company and consists of the personnel necessary for the coordination and control of the company in action. It contains the following personnel:

a. The company commander, a major, who exercises command of the entire company on the march and in a covered approach. He directs the combat action of the machine-gun platoons and the mortar platoon.

b. The company executive officer, a captain, who is second-in-command of the company. He assists the company commander and replaces him if he becomes a casualty. He is also the company machine-gun officer.

c. The reconnaissance officer, who assists the company commander in terrain reconnaissance, in the reconnaissance of initial and subsequent firing positions, and in the computation

of firing data. During the approach march he represents the company commander at battalion headquarters and assists the battalion commander in his reconnaissance for assembly positions. He has charge of the reconnaissance details in displacements of the battalion base of fire.

d. The first sergeant, who assists the company commander and is in charge of the operation of the enlisted personnel of the command group during combat. He establishes and operates the company command post and supervises company communications.

e. The reconnaissance sergeant, who assists the reconnaissance officer.

f. The signal corporal, who is in charge of company communications under the first sergeant. He establishes and maintains communication within the company and between the company and the battalion command post.

g. The field musics are trained as observers.

h. The two messengers and signalmen accompany the company commander.

184. **Administration and Supply Group.**—a. This group consists of the personnel provided to assist the company commander in the administration and supply of the company. The group includes:

Master gunnery sergeant and armorer.

Supply sergeant, privates for ammunition and supply, barber, and cobbler.

The mess sergeant, the cooks, and their assistants.

The company clerk (corporal).

b. During combat this group is located in the rear echelon, usually in or near the bivouac area of the regiment. The mess and supply personnel operate under the supervision of the regimental supply officer and the company clerk under the supervision of the regimental adjutant. The master gunnery sergeant is the ordnance technician of the company. He supervises and directs all ordnance maintenance within the company. He may also be made available as an assistant to and as a replacement for the lieutenant of the AA and AT platoon. The armorer services and repairs the small arms weapons of the company.

185. **Route Column.**—During the advance in route column, the position of the weapons company may be in the rear of the rifle companies or interspersed throughout the battalion by platoons for antiaircraft defense. It is placed to facilitate marching or in the latter case to provide protection. The march formation may be varied to meet threatened air attacks, in which case machine-gun sections or platoons, may be distributed throughout the battalion column, including the unit

trains. Antiaircraft protection for troops in route column is a serious problem. The machine-gun handcart permits the gun to be carried set up on its mount ready to deliver antiaircraft fire instantly. Machine guns may be mounted on carts for antiaircraft fire when transported by truck. During the advance on foot in route column, if early use of the weapons company is probable as in case of a battalion acting as an advance guard, it should at least precede the reserve company in the battalion column.

186. **Development.**—a. The company develops for the approach march in accordance with the situation and the development order of the battalion commander, who prescribes the general dispositions of the battalion, the initial location of the company, any detachments for special missions, and the assembly areas, positions in readiness, or other march objectives on which the advance is to be directed.

b. The place of the company in the battalion dispositions varies widely with the situation. The most usual place is as the rear element of the battalion. In a covered approach, where the battalion is to relieve or pass through covering troops, the company may, however, precede the leading rifle units with a view to the relief of the weapons company of the covering troops and the prompt establishment of an initial base of fire prior to the arrival of the rifle companies.

c. On development of the battalion, the battalion commander usually directs the detachment of the antitank platoon for missions under his immediate direction. Where the passage of a defile is in prospect, the detachment of a machine-gun platoon for the antiaircraft protection of the battalion may be necessary.

d. The development order of the company commander is usually issued in fragmentary form. His instructions cover:

Information of the enemy and of friendly troops not already known to platoon leaders and pertinent to their missions.

Initial objective of the battalion and the company.

Distribution and initial location of platoons; detachments in accordance with battalion orders.

Base of the movement.

Method of movement, whether movement is to commence at a certain hour or on signal or order, whether readiness for immediate action throughout the movement is required.

(The heavy machine guns may receive AA and ground defense missions upon development.)

187. **Approach March.**—a. The company commander regulates the advance of the company by the assignment of successive objectives. It is usually of first importance to direct

the platoons to their initial locations and assemble platoon leaders at an observation point at which they can receive instructions and observe the terrain of the initial advance.

b. The initial position of the weapons company in the approach-march formation of the battalion is ordered by the battalion commander. It is such as to enable the company to use the best concealed approaches in the battalion zone of action and far enough behind the rifle units to afford protection against surprise fire from advanced hostile detachments, yet close enough to the front to provide prompt support when resistance is encountered. The formation of the weapons company units in the approach march corresponds as far as practicable to those adopted by the rifle companies; that is, in small columns. Covered and concealed routes for the carts are especially important, as the nature of the transportation discloses the identity of the unit. Guns are kept in their carts as long as possible because they are heavy and carrying them by hand reduces the mobility of the unit. However, under direct observation of the enemy, the guns must usually be carried forward by hand. In this case, carts are kept as close to the guns as practicable. They may be advanced by covered routes not tactically suitable for the guns to follow, or they may be held under cover and advanced as soon as the enemy observers are driven from their position.

c. In a covered approach, the situation does not call for prompt readiness for action, except for antitank defense, against hostile ground elements. The distribution and movement of the company can, therefore, be regulated solely with a view to facilitating movement restricting losses from air and tank attack and artillery fire to a minimum, and as far as practicable, concealing the movement of troops from hostile ground and air observation. Advantage can generally best be taken of covered routes of advance by a flexible distribution in depth (successive platoons). Where a high state of readiness for action is required, machine-gun platoons advance by section echelons and by bounds.

d. In an uncovered approach of the battalion, readiness for action against hostile ground elements throughout the depth of the battalion and protection against flank attack may be required. In such case, distribution of the machine guns over the entire width of the battalion zone is generally necessary.

e. The mortar platoon is disposed so as best to facilitate movement and reduce exposure to hostile observation and fire. In accordance with the situation and the terrain, it moves by covered routes to the objective designated by the company commander, or advances abreast of or follows the machine-gun platoons.

188. **Reconnaissance During Approach March.**—a. Reconnaissance is continuous from the moment combat appears imminent until the action is terminated. The extent and thoroughness of the reconnaissance will be governed by the time available and the situation. Maps and aerial photographs are used to supplement study of the ground. Friendly troops to the front and flanks are valuable sources of information. The company commander is responsible for initiating and continuing reconnaissance with the means at his disposal.

b. When the company develops from route column, the reconnaissance officer, with the reconnaissance details, joins the battalion command group and remains with it until the company commander joins the battalion commander to receive orders.

c. The reconnaissance officer executes such detailed reconnaissance as may be desired by the battalion commander. His reconnaissance bears especially on the location of stream crossings, detours, and the employment of mortars and machine guns under any plan of action contemplated by the battalion commander. He promptly transmits important items of information to the company commander by messenger.

d. When action appears imminent, the company commander, on summons of the battalion commander, instructs the second-in-command to move the company to its march objective or to a position in readiness and joins the battalion commander. Following instructions of the battalion commander indicating the battalion objective and the general employment area of machine guns and mortars, he conducts reconnaissance, with the assistance of the reconnaissance details, for the organization of a base of fire, the determination of target areas, the distribution of his platoons to position areas, and the location of an observation post.

e. Throughout these operations, the reconnaissance officer is prepared to advise the company commander as to positions, routes thereto, and target areas. He is especially charged with the execution of the company commander's orders in respect to the distribution of target areas, the computation of firing data, the selection and installation of the observation post, and the establishment of signal communications within the company.

189. **AA and AT Protection of Battalion Assembly Area.**—a. The company commander, from a map study, makes the initial distribution of his company units. The platoons are generally moved so that protection is afforded the troops on their arrival. The machine guns are located on high ground with commanding fields of fire, in open positions, about 1,000 yards out, on the perimeter of the area, and affording all around protection. While affording maximum protection for the assembly area, the formation must permit prompt use of the guns in support of the battalion in the attack.

b. The antitank guns are emplaced to command likely avenues of hostile tank approach to the front and flanks. They must have good fields of fire and a cover position close in rear of the firing position; or they may be held mobile with positions and routes thereto reconnoitered.

190. Attack Missions.—The general missions of the weapons company in the attack are—

a. **To give close support to the leading rifle companies.**

(1) The mortars should generally be assigned targets defiladed against flat trajectory fire, especially those too close to the attacking echelon to be dealt with by artillery and isolated point targets on which mortar fire can be more rapidly adjusted. Hostile machine guns, because of their effective defensive value, are desirable mortar targets.

(2) Machine gun supporting fires include fires engaging hostile elements opposing the advance of the rifle troops or tanks. Wherever practicable, fires in support of rifle units are overhead fires directed against hostile elements in the battalion zone, or fires directed against hostile elements in adjacent zones. Terrain will often force the machine guns to fire through gaps between leading rifle units. Support sometimes includes short preparatory machine-gun fires. Fires in support of rifle units are frequently masked shortly after the attack commences. The effectiveness of supporting fires depends principally upon adequate observation of the targets and the location of advancing rifle elements.

b. **To protect rifle units against fires from hostile elements in rear of the leading hostile elements.**—Protective missions usually become the principal mission of part of the machine guns when the advance of the attacking echelon masks supporting fires. They may include hostile reverse slope areas. Protective fires against enemy rearward elements are directed especially against heavy weapons, unarmored vehicles, known or suspected locations of enemy reserves, and counterattack elements. Early fixing of safety limits to control such fires when the attacking echelon has become closely engaged is essential. Missions are prearranged by directing platoons to prepare data to fire on key-points in enemy rear areas visible from platoon observation posts, or by the assignment of fire sectors. Success of fires depends on effective observation.

c. **To protect the flanks of the battalion.**—Provision is made for flank protective fires by machine guns and mortars whenever the location or the advance of the battalion creates an exposed flank. Flank protection is the special mission of the machine-gun platoon or platoons holding positions on the exposed flank. Flank protective fires are opened on observation of enemy action, on signal, or on call from rifle companies. Information or observation of the exact location of rifle elements in the assigned fire sectors is imperative.

d. **To protect the battalion against hostile low flying airplanes.**—Machine-gun platoons automatically provide antiaircraft defense of the battalion. When not required for the execution of ground missions, the guns of one section in each machine-gun platoon may take positions particularly for antiaircraft defense. They are constantly prepared to go into position for ground fire. In the siting of guns, the ground situation has priority over all antiaircraft missions.

e. **To protect the battalion against hostile mechanized forces.**—(1) The antitank platoon will be held mobile, in a position of readiness, or actually placed in position to cover the most likely avenues of approach for hostile mechanized forces.

(2) Orders to the antitank platoon are complete as regards when, where and how much antimechanized protection is to be effected. Since this unit necessarily operates almost semi-independently in the battalion zone, the order should specify:

Initial antimechanized protection to be afforded prior to the attack.

Areas of the battalion zone, vulnerable to hostile tank approach during the attack, which should be continuously covered by antimechanized protection.

Possible successive objectives of the battalion, on which reorganization may be effected, probable routes of hostile counter-attack leading thereto, and the amount of antimechanized protection desired thereon.

The final objective, and the amount of antimechanized protection desired thereon.

191. Methods of Employment, Machine-Gun Platoons.—a. The machine-gun fire support of an attack includes covering the advance of the rifle units to their first firing position, and assisting them by fire in the advance. The battalion commander is responsible for the tactical use, within the battalion zone of action of the machine guns which are a part of, or may be temporarily attached to, his battalion. The distribution should be such that will enable the guns to support the assault rifle companies in all initial stages of the attack. In these initial stages, all available guns should be used; thereafter, the maximum support possible, under the limitations imposed by the necessity for advancing the guns, must be rendered.

b. When an occasion arises for the machine-gun platoons of the weapons company to go into action, the battalion commander, guided by the recommendations of the weapons company commander, assigns missions, the method of support, and the approximate positions to be occupied by the platoons, usually in general terms. The company commander must exercise initiative and ingenuity in working out the assignment in order to execute the machine-gun fire missions most effectively and economically. Such methods of support, posi-

tions, and targets, are used as will best promote the plan of the battalion commander. Whenever possible, commanding ground is occupied in order to provide overhead fire. Even more desirable, if they can be secured, are positions permitting both flanking and overhead fire. Intricate and confusing plans of machine-gun fire support are avoided. Direct and easily carried out methods are used. Crossing of supporting fires to obtain flanking fire must not be used without a further consideration of the possible difficulties of continued close support and rapid displacement to new supporting positions. As the attack progresses, some parts of the line advance more rapidly than others and this presents opportunities for flanking fire on the enemy in front of the units which are advancing slowly. Full advantage is taken of such opportunities to assist neighboring units and inflict casualties on the enemy. The battalion attack may be supported either by the platoons as a unit in general support, or by giving some of the platoons the mission of direct support of certain rifle companies.

192. Methods of Employment, Machine-Gun Platoons, Defined.—a. All platoons in general support of the battalion. This method is appropriate when the entire battalion zone is visible from a single favorable firing position, and has the advantage of retaining the fire power of the company under the direct control of the battalion commander, through the weapons company commander, and facilitates the supply and control of the company during action. It is suitable when a position can be found for the three platoons close enough together to allow control by the company commander, and from which targets in any part of the battalion zone can be engaged. Such terrain will not often be found. Even when the situation permits or demands general support initially, it will generally be the case, as the attack progresses and the route of advance of each assault rifle company varies, that individual machine-gun platoons will have to be placed in direct support of each assault company. General support is desirable when: (1) The initial resistance is expected to be light, and until the situation is more fully developed; (2) A strong fire concentration is required; (3) The battalion zone is narrow where the battalion attacks in column of companies; (4) One assault company is expected to advance more rapidly than the other, and the machine guns can follow the faster moving unit in order to gain flanking fire on the resistance encountered by the other assault company.

b. **One platoon in direct support of each assault company.**—This method gives more prompt and effective support to the assault units. It is used when the weapons company commander is able to supply the platoon but cannot efficiently control the fire. Control of the machine-gun platoon is retained by the company commander to the extent of enabling him to coordinate its fires with those of the other platoons or divert its fire to a battalion mission, but the

platoon leader makes every effort to furnish the fire support requested by the commander of the unit supported. The mission of a machine-gun platoon placed in direct support of a rifle company is to anticipate and provide close fire support, with, or without requests from the rifle unit. The principle involved is one of cooperation of effort on the part of both the machine-gun platoon leader and the rifle company commander in order to facilitate the advance of the riflemen. It will usually be the case that one machine-gun platoon will be ordered in direct support of each assault rifle company, while the third one, under direct control of the company commander, furnishes general support over the battalion zone of action, including antiaircraft missions, protection of flanks, fire on hostile counterattacks and critical points of resistance.

c. **Platoons attached to assault companies.**—This method is appropriate only when the rifle company is operating on a semi-independent mission such as during pursuit, as a detached security element operating over extremely difficult terrain, or when the rifle company has to move to such a distance and operate under conditions such that it cannot be effectively controlled by the battalion commander. When machine guns accompany a rifle unit on any of these missions they should be attached. In this case the weapons company commander can neither control nor supply the accompanying machine guns. When a machine-gun platoon is attached to a rifle company it becomes a part of that company and the rifle company commander, guided by the recommendations of the machine-gun platoon leader, is responsible for its proper tactical and technical employment in addition to his already heavy responsibility for his rifle company. The supply of the attached machine-gun platoon is the responsibility of the rifle unit commander, but the recommendations and needs of the attached machine guns must be presented by the platoon leader of the attached platoon. The cooperation of the machine-gun platoon leader in this case requires that he perform every possible task in regards to machine guns which will assist the commander of the unit to which attached. In detail, the conditions under which the attachment of machine guns is justified are:—(1) Enveloping maneuvers in which the maneuver units go beyond the control of the battalion commander; (2) Advances through woods, fog, or darkness; (3) Employment in landings; (4) When other conditions render centralized control impossible for considerable periods; (5) On independent missions or detached duty as a part of combat patrols, guards, raiding or foraging parties; and (6) During pursuit after the enemy has been routed.

d. **AA protection.**—Protection against low-flying aircraft is a secondary mission for all machine guns. Sometimes one section in each platoon is specifically assigned this mission. In all cases, however, ground missions have priority.

193. **Methods of Employment, Mortar Platoon.**—The 81mm mortar platoon is usually employed in general support of the battalion as a whole. This depends upon the availability of observation in close proximity to the positions of the leading rifle companies. It is better to attach a mortar section to each assault company than to rely upon distant observation to obtain the close support desired. See Section 8 of this text.

194. **Attack.**—a. Mission of company.—The company commander receives his mission in the battalion attack order. The order covers organization of the initial battalion base of fire and the battalion plan of supporting and protective fires. Instructions to the company commander indicate the position areas, order of fires, conditions for opening fire, and arrangements for displacement to successive bases of fire in support of the attack. These instructions are usually given in fragmentary form. Missions are frequently of short duration and must be renewed from time to time.

b. Location of fire base.—As a general rule, the battalion base of fire is located as close as practicable to the first mask in rear of the line of departure. Fire control from a distant observation post and dependence on a long line of communications deprive the fire of infantry supporting weapons of the flexibility necessary to meet unexpected situations and the changing conditions of battle.

Where masked positions are occupied, the requirements imposed by mask clearance of fire on the machine-gun targets will often be the determining factor in fixing the location of the firing position. Where, however, the occupation of masked positions would result in the removal of the machine guns to an excessive distance from the rifle companies, open positions should be occupied.

The location of the battalion base of fire varies with the terrain and the situation. As a general rule, its distance from the departure positions of the rifle companies should not exceed 500 yards. Machine guns in masked positions should be prepared to take open positions on the shortest possible notice. Likewise, alternate masked positions may be selected when open primary positions are occupied.

Where the control of mortar fire is dependent upon observation in the assembly areas of the leading companies, it is generally better to place the mortars at the disposition of rifle company commanders than to rely on distant observation for the conduct of fire.

195. **Distribution of Positions and Missions.**—Where positions have already been reconnoitered, the reconnaissance of the company commander for the distribution of weapons on the battalion base of fire is usually brief, and is made primarily with a view to:—

Determining whether the fire of weapons platoons will be controlled as a unit, or by the distribution of fire missions to the platoons.

Checking and limiting with greater precision the platoon positions and target areas, or sectors of fire; making arrangements for observation, control, and preparation of fires.

Locating a company observation post.

196. **Fire Control.**—Unit fire control of the machine-gun platoons under company direction greatly increases fire effect, but requires a clear field of view over the entire battalion zone from a central observation post and reliable signal communications from the company observation post to the platoons. These conditions will not often obtain, and the company commander will more frequently direct the machine-gun fires by the assignment of missions to the platoons. Where unit control is retained by the company commander, he takes, as a secondary mission, target areas in the zones of adjacent battalions.

197. **Target Areas.**—a. Machine guns.—Machine guns should generally be assigned to long-range targets not defiladed against flat-trajectory fire. In overhead fires, the machine-gun targets will ordinarily lie in a zone from 400 to 1,500 yards in front of the attacking echelon. The limiting ranges will vary with the terrain.

b. Mortars.—Mortars should generally be assigned close and midrange targets defiladed against flat-trajectory fire, especially those too close to the attacking echelon to be dealt with by artillery, and isolated point targets on which mortar fire can be more rapidly adjusted. Mortar targets generally lie in a zone from 200 to 600 yards in front of the attacking echelon. They should not be assigned targets vulnerable to flat-trajectory fire.

c. Close and midrange flanking fires should be executed by the company light machine guns and are only exceptionally assigned to heavy machine-gun units.

198. **Machine-Gun Fires From Initial Base of Fire.**—a. Supporting Fires.—These fires engage hostile elements opposing the initial advance of the riflemen or tanks. They are generally overhead fires against hostile elements in the battalion zone, or long-range fires against the enemy in adjacent zones. They sometimes include short machine-gun preparations fired prior to the attack of rifle units. To be effective, observation of the targets and of the advancing rifle units is essential, as the fire is frequently masked by the attacking troops shortly after the attack commences. The company commander's orders include instructions for ceasing or lifting fires on signal from observation posts, from the reconnaissance detail, or on the initiative of platoon leaders based on observation of the advance of the riflemen.

Fires in support of initial tank advances are not restricted by a safety limit. They are directed principally against known antitank gun emplacements or antitank guns that disclose their positions by flashes or muzzle blast during the tank advance. They may extend from the line of departure to a distance of 1,500 yards in advance of it.

b. Long-range protective fires.—These include fires on hostile elements in rear of the leading hostile troops which endanger the attacking echelon. They may be fired on reverse slope areas and usually become the principal mission when supporting fires are masked by the attacking echelon.

Protective fires against enemy rear elements are directed especially against heavy weapons, unarmored vehicles, known or suspected locations of enemy reserves, and counterattacking elements. The early fixing of safety limits to control such fires is essential. Missions are prearranged by directing platoons to prepare firing data on numbered key points in the enemy rear areas visible from platoon observation posts, or by the assignment of fire sectors. Success depends upon effective observation. Registration on key points prior to the attack is resorted to only upon orders of the battalion commander.

c. Flank protective fires.—These fires are commenced upon observation of enemy action on the flank, on signal, or on call from rifle companies. Information or observation of the exact location of friendly rifle elements in the assigned sectors of fire is imperative. Provision is made for flank protective fires whenever the advance of the battalion creates an exposed flank. Flank protection is the special duty of the platoon or platoons holding positions on the exposed flank.

d. Antiaircraft fires.—When not required for ground missions, the guns of one section in each platoon take position for antiaircraft fire. They are constantly prepared to go into positions for ground fire. The ground situation has priority over all antiaircraft missions. Machine guns do not allow themselves to be diverted from ground missions by aerial attack.

199. Determination of Fire Data.—Having been informed of the positions and the targets for the weapons, the company commander then causes the ranges to the various targets to be determined by such means as are available. The reconnaissance officer may be assigned to this task. Ranges may be determined by the reconnaissance sergeant reading them directly with the range finder; they may be measured from the maps; they may be obtained from troops on the ground who have previously determined them; or they may be determined by estimate. Time may not permit or it may become otherwise impracticable for the company commander or reconnaissance officer to determine the ranges. In such case they will have to be determined by the platoons when they arrive

in position. If the situation permits, ranges to targets and to probable targets are determined by fire for adjustment. Other essential fire data is determined as described above for ranges, or as prescribed by appropriate orders. The second in command is in charge of the company during this period.

200. Company Commander's Order.—a. When the company commander has received the battalion order, he assembles his platoon leaders and their assistants at a designated time and place, if possible, where the terrain over which the attack is to be made can be observed. The company commander orients his leaders and issues his order.

b. The company commander's order follows the standard five-paragraph form and should cover the following:

Information of the enemy and our own troops; including battalion plan of attack, assembly positions, objectives, lines of departure assigned leading rifle companies, and whether tanks are to lead the attack.

Battalion base of fire; including position areas and missions of mortars, and missions and position areas of the machine guns.

Primary and secondary fire missions assigned each platoon; including general position area, sector of fire or target areas, priorities of fire, hour, signal, or other arrangements for opening fire, especially when machine gun preparations are fired; signals and by whom given for ceasing or lifting supporting fires, where platoons are released to platoon leaders.

Allotments of ammunition for specific missions, general arrangements for ammunition (route of advance and ammunition distributing point), and water supply.

Communications within company.—whether central control station is to be set up; location of company and battalion command posts.

c. Orders to the company may be fragmentary. The company commander may lead part of the company while the reconnaissance officer leads the remainder, issuing fragmentary orders enroute. This is done so that positions may be occupied and support given quickly to the assault echelons.

d. The company commander then sends messengers to the rifle companies in the leading echelon.

201. Occupation of Positions.—The first consideration in occupying positions is to get the company into the position with the least possible loss and without exposing it to enemy observation. To accomplish this purpose, it may be necessary to place a portion of the weapons in position and use their fire to cover the occupation of positions by other platoons. The positions of the platoons may often be separated by a considerable distance. In such case the company commander or reconnaissance officer should supervise the occupation of

positions of the platoon which will have the most important mission. If positions cannot be occupied without certain discovery by the enemy, the position should be entered rapidly and boldly, the guns being brought into action as soon as possible.

202. **Cover and Concealment.**—In the attack, cover from fire will seldom be found, and time for preparing cover will rarely be available, but advantage should be taken of such natural features as are present. Concealed positions carefully selected and occupied are generally of greater value than visible positions which attract enemy attention. Observation from both ground and air must be considered in seeking concealment. Natural features such as reverse slopes, woods, brush, standing crops, and tall weeds are taken advantage of to secure concealment. The company commander must exercise good judgement in the selection of cover and concealment. Those positions which are obvious or which afford easy registration points for the enemy artillery are avoided.

203. **Factors to be Considered in Selecting Positions for Caliber .30 Heavy Machine Guns in the Attack.—**

a. MISSION.

b. TARGET OR SECTOR OF FIRE.

Field of fire:

Length.
Width.
Interference by trees, brush, or other obstacles.

Accuracy of fire:

Range to target.
Observation of fire.

Duration of fire:

Location of friendly troops.
Commanding ground (overhead fire rule).*
Through a gap (lateral fire rule).* (25 mils lateral clearance.)**

c. SAFETY FOR GUNS AND PERSONNEL.

Danger of:

Areas under hostile fire.
Prominent locations or terrain features.

Concealment:

From ground observation.
From air observation.

Cover:

Partial defilade.
Position defilade.
Interval between guns.
Noise of firing.

d. TIME AVAILABLE FOR OCCUPYING POSITIONS.

e. ROUTES TO POSITIONS.

For occupation:

Length.
Protection afforded.

For supply:

Length.
Protection afforded.

f. CONTACT WITH UNIT BEING SUPPORTED.

g. DISPLACEMENT FORWARD.

Routes available:

Length.
Protection afforded.

*A combination of commanding ground and through a gap is highly desirable. The gunner's rule and leader's rule may be found in the appropriate Army Field Manual.

**Lateral clearance of 25 mils is desirable between the lateral limits of fire and each flank of a gap in the friendly front line. The angle is measured from the gun position.

204. Initiative of Leaders.—It is the duty of the weapons company commander and platoon leaders to continue the fires of all weapons in support of the attacking rifle companies or for the protection of the battalion flanks in accordance with orders and instructions issued. They do not await receipt of requests from supported units before delivering supporting and protective fires. By keeping closely in touch with the situation they anticipate the requirements of the attacking companies and deliver fires without request from them.

205. Communications and Liaison in the Attack.—a. The weapons company command post is established in the vicinity of the battalion command post.

b. The weapons company observation post is established in the vicinity of the battalion observation post.

c. The weapons company commander is responsible for maintaining liaison with:—

The battalion command post.—One messenger is used for this purpose.

The battalion commander.—The weapons company commander remains with the battalion commander except when combat duties require his presence elsewhere. During such absence, the company commander designates a liaison agent to remain with the battalion commander. This agent may be the reconnaissance officer, the reconnaissance sergeant, a messenger, or any other individual most available at the moment.

The rifle companies in the attacking echelon.—Messengers are used for this purpose.

Elements of his own command.

d. Platoons send their instrument corporal, or an observer, and one messenger to the weapons company command post as directed by the company commander.

206. **Displacement.**—a. Battalion commander.—The battalion commander anticipates displacement by the early designation of a new base of fire, or when a base of fire is not to be designated, by prescribing general areas from which the machine guns and mortars will support the rifle units, protect their flanks, or deliver other protective fires as the attack progresses.

b. Reconnaissance.—Reconnaissance must be continuous throughout the attack. The company commander is responsible that proper and timely reconnaissance is made for routes of advance and for more advanced firing positions and targets. The reconnaissance officer and detail assist the company commander and carry out such reconnaissance as he may direct.

c. Reconnaissance Officer and Detail.—The reconnaissance officer and detail follow the attacking echelon, moving from cover to cover by defiladed routes. They occupy positions to observe the attacking echelon and communicate with the company observation post by visual signalling. They locate target areas, select gun positions and observation posts, set up instruments for obtaining firing data for weapons when occupying the new positions, and mark the gun sites with stakes. The reconnaissance officer, when necessary, signals for lifting or ceasing fire.

d. Platoon Leaders.—Displacement is commenced on order of the company commander early enough to insure continuous protection of rifle companies and timely occupation of positions on the next base of fire. Platoon leaders notify the company commander when they can no longer execute fire missions due to lack of observation of targets; when safety provisions for rifle troops mask their fire; or when displacement is necessary to occupy gun positions for the protection of an exposed flank. The platoon leaders recommend new positions from which the assigned missions can be carried out.

e. Methods.—The displacement of the machine guns is affected as a unit, by platoon echelon, or by section echelon in each platoon. Echeloned displacement usually permits continuity of fire; the echelon remaining in place takes over the fire missions of the moving echelon. Displacement by platoon echelons favors prompt re-establishment of fire control and the unified action of the platoons. However, considerations of flank protection may make displacement by section echelons necessary.

Mortars may be displaced independently or in coordination with the machine guns. When observation over the zone of peculiar interest to mortar fire becomes deficient, displacement should be initiated, regardless of the situation of the machine guns. A coordinated displacement, however, favors the establishment of a new base of fire and the concentration and coordination of machine-gun and mortar fire. The mortar platoon displaces as a unit or by section or squad echelons.

f. Observation Posts.—Company and platoon observation posts hold the advancing infantry under constant observation, independent of the action of the reconnaissance officer and detail, and when necessary call for the cessation or lifting of fires.

207. Orders for Displacement.—The company commander's orders for displacement are usually fragmentary. They follow the standard form and should cover: any changes in the situation necessary for them to know, position areas and missions, target areas and sectors of fire, priorities of fire, any changes in the ammunition supply, and changes in the communications of the company.

208. Supply.—a. One of the chief concerns of the company commander is the supply of the company. In advancing, the company is constantly moving away from its source of supply, and at the same time it is consuming the supplies on hand. The difficu'ty of keeping the company supplied with ammunition, food, water, spare parts, and oil increases as the attack progresses and demands increasing attention from the company commander.

b. It is the duty of the rear echelon in accordance with instructions issued by the company commander, to supply the forward echelon with all that is required in the attack except ammunition. To insure the continuity of supply, it is essential that requirements be anticipated and that steps be taken in advance to meet them.

209. Covering Reorganization.—a. All elements of an attack do not progress uniformly. Units become separated from their commands, casualties deplete the ranks, and disorganization results. At such times it is necessary to halt the attack and reorganize before continuing the advance. When a battalion in the attack echelon is halted for reorganization on terrain vital to the hostile defense, the weapons company is disposed at once to cover the front and flanks of the battalion. Since an enemy counterattack may be expected at this time, it is essential that the positions selected be such as will give good fields of fire and afford the maximum security to the reorganizing battalion, and if possible be favorable for resumption of the attack. The machine guns and mortars are the chief source of protection at this time and are used

boldly and energetically. The antitank platoon is emplaced to cover the most favorable avenues of approach for hostile mechanized forces. The base of fire is moved promptly.

b. There are two requirements which usually conflict in the selection of positions to cover reorganization: namely, that they be good defensive positions, and that they permit supporting fire at the resumption of the attack. The situation will decide which is the more important requirement in any case.

c. During reorganization, prompt reconnaissance is made to insure that all available fire power can be promptly placed in support of the leading echelon when the attack is resumed, with special attention to the flanks if they are exposed. No time is wasted searching for ideal positions. Suitable positions are selected and preparations are made to move to them from the positions which cover reorganization. Ammunition is brought forward to the position.

210. Resuming Attack After Reorganization.—a. When the attack is halted for reorganization, fire superiority may be lost, and in such case it will then be necessary to regain it before the advance can be resumed. Machine guns and mortars are specially valuable in regaining fire superiority and assisting the resumption of the advance, all available guns being used for that purpose.

b. The positions satisfying the requirements of supporting fire at the resumption of the attack may often be different from those used in covering reorganization. The company commander considers this during the reorganization, and, if the positions first occupied do not permit effective supporting fire, he makes such changes as may be necessary.

c. These new positions are occupied in time to assist in the preparatory fire. The company commander exercises care and judgment in moving to the new positions in order that the guns may not be caught en route by a surprise action of the enemy.

211. Consolidation.—a. One of the most important functions of machine guns and mortars in the attack is to assist in holding ground which has been gained. At the conclusion of the attack, rifle units may be seriously depleted and disorganized and the men exhausted both mentally and physically. It is then that the machine guns and mortars can give invaluable assistance to the infantry battalion by promptly occupying and defending the ground gained by the riflemen.

b. When the objective has been gained or a halt has been ordered, preparation for the defense of the ground gained is begun immediately. This step marks transition from an offensive to a defensive character of action. The role of the weapons company is much the same in consolidation as in

reorganization. The selection of gun positions, however, may be made solely with the view of defense of the ground gained.

212. **Weapon Companies of Reserve Battalions.**—a. While the weapons companies of reserve infantry battalions should normally be tactically available to their own battalion commanders, they may, under exceptional circumstances, be withdrawn from their battalions and used on special missions. The necessity for their use for special missions should be carefully weighed against the desirability of retaining them for action with their respective battalions.

b. It may be desirable in some situations to employ the weapons company of the reserve battalion to support the attacking battalions in the initial stages of an attack. However, this should be done only if an adequate supply of ammunition is assured for anticipated subsequent operations with the reserve battalion.

c. Whenever any element of the weapons company of a reserve battalion is employed under regimental control, it should be utilized only so long as it can fire from initial positions without being masked, and without displacement forward. Such initial positions should be close to the initial position of its battalion, or on the route by which the battalion will probably be committed.

d. When held in reserve, the company is always with its battalion and is prepared to assume an active role without delay. Its equipment is kept in condition and its supplies and ammunition are maintained at normal levels at all times.

213. **Special Missions.**—Occasionally a single weapons company is withdrawn from reserve to execute a special mission, such as; to cover a deployment, to fire preparatory fires, to meet a counterattack, or to assist an assault battalion which has been held up. The designated commander assigns the company mission and position. The company commander is responsible for the details of execution.

214. **Attacks Against Villages.**—In attacking a village, machine-gun and mortar fire is concentrated on the hostile front and flanks, while the rifle companies maneuver to attack from one or both flanks. Positions are selected so as to permit the delivery of fire against the village until the friendly riflemen have entered it.

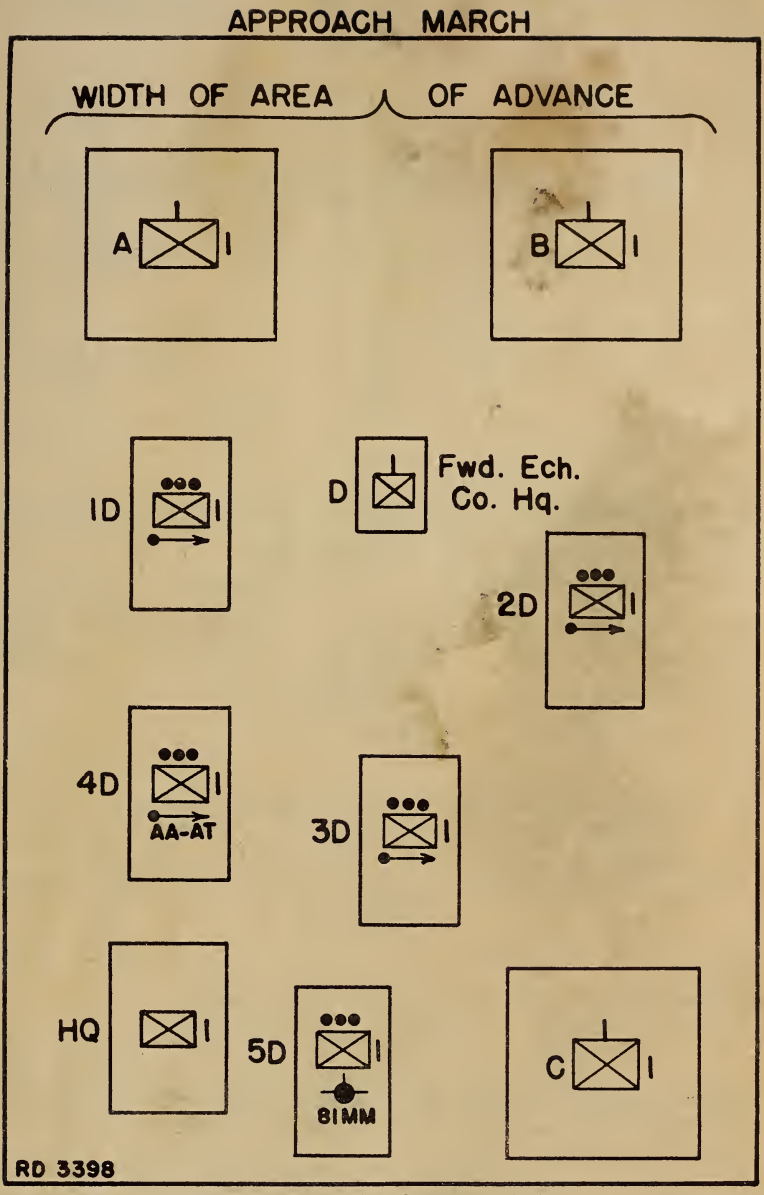
215. **Night Attacks.**—a. The weapons of the weapons company do not, in general, fire in support of night attacks. If daylight is available for reconnaissance, firing data is prepared to support the attacking echelon in case the attack is repulsed. The data prepared is for fire on the objective and fire is not opened except on signal from the attacking echelon.

Positions are carefully prepared and secrecy is maintained in moving into position. A sufficient supply of ammunition is kept on hand to execute the fires.

b. Plans are prepared for the prompt displacement of part, usually half, of the weapons, in case the attack is successful. The displacement is made as soon as the objective is taken and secured by the attacking riflemen and ammunition is brought up to the new position. On arrival at the position, or at the first light of dawn, all leaders promptly check the guns for fields of fire and alternate positions to support the riflemen to their front and flanks. If possible, the company commander sends liaison details with the attacking echelon to determine their exact position. One member of the detail then returns to guide the weapons company units into position. If the distance to the objective is short, the weapons company units proceed rapidly to it in one bound. The weapons remaining on the original position are held ready to fire long range missions in support of the new position.

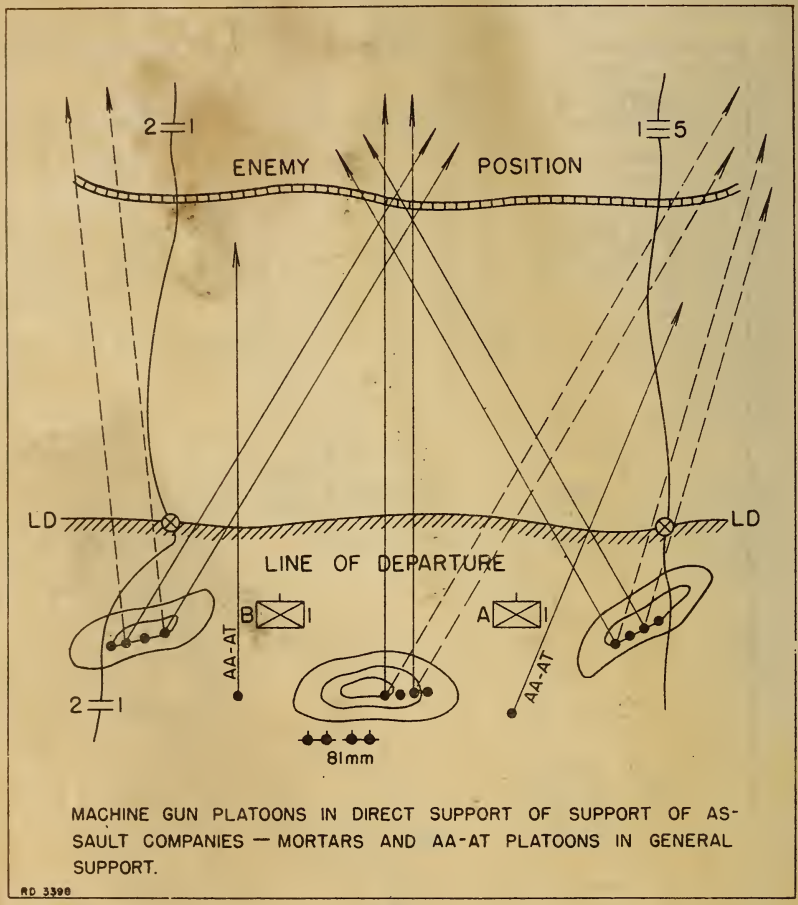
c. If the attack is to be resumed at daylight, reconnaissance details check gun positions and target areas, and the weapons are sent forward promptly to establish the new base of fire. Guides lead the units to their selected position areas. Ammunition supply must be continuous.

216. **Illustrative Situations.**—The use of the weapons of this company in varying situations are illustrated in the following figures.



WEAPONS COMPANY OF A
BATTALION IN AN APPROACH MARCH
FORMATION
FIGURE 20

DIRECT SUPPORT METHOD



MACHINE GUN PLATOONS IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF SUPPORT OF ASSAULT COMPANIES — MORTARS AND AA-AT PLATOONS IN GENERAL SUPPORT.

RD 3398

FIGURE 21

Situation.—a. High ground on both flanks.

b. Uniform resistance and flanks insecure.

c. Each forward machine-gun platoon has the mission of direct support of the rifle company to its front and the protection of that flank of the battalion on which it is located.

d. The rear machine-gun platoon is maintained in general support. It provides antiaircraft protection for the battalion and engages the most dangerous targets within the battalion zone of action. It is also used to support the main effort.

DIRECT SUPPORT DURING THE ATTACK

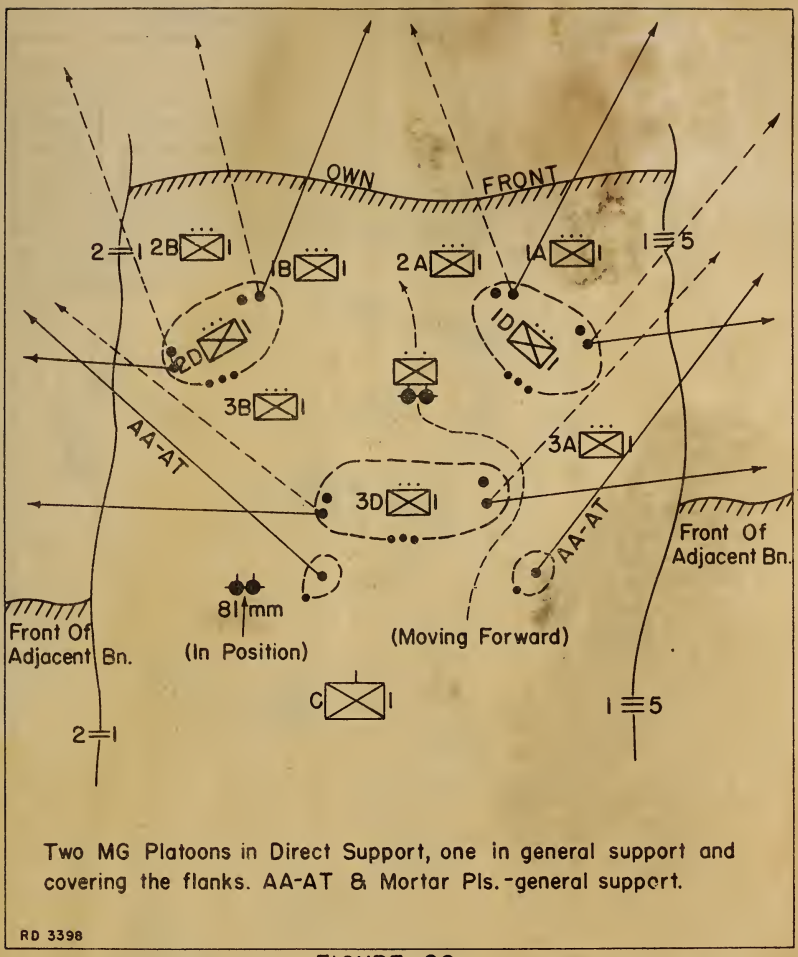


FIGURE 22

Situation.—a. Assault battalion more advanced than adjacent units.

b. Such a distribution of the machine guns frequently admits of firing through gaps in the front line of riflemen and provides machine-gun fire protection on the immediate flanks of rifle companies or platoons.

c. This method enables effective support to be rendered when the terrain affords no elevated firing positions or when woods prevent frontal or flanking fire from the rear areas in support of assault units.

EXAMPLE OF AN ATTACHED PLATOON

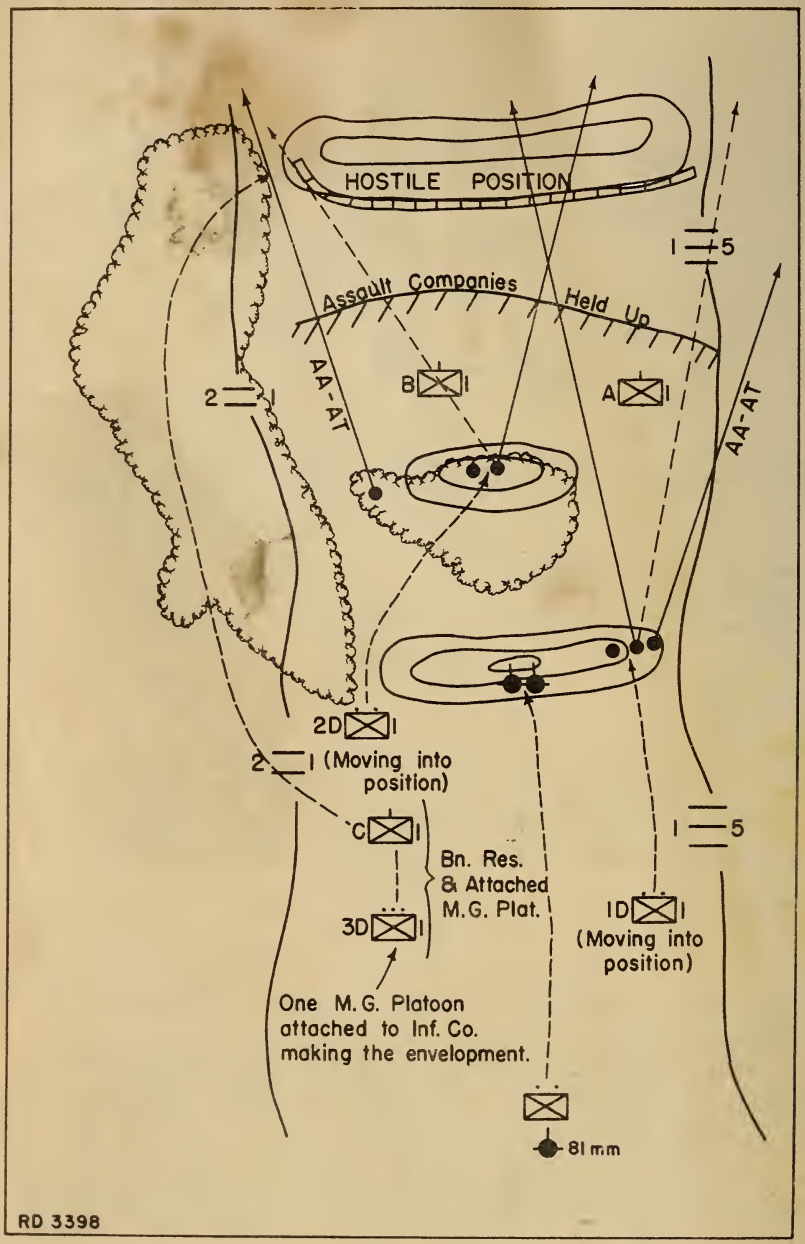
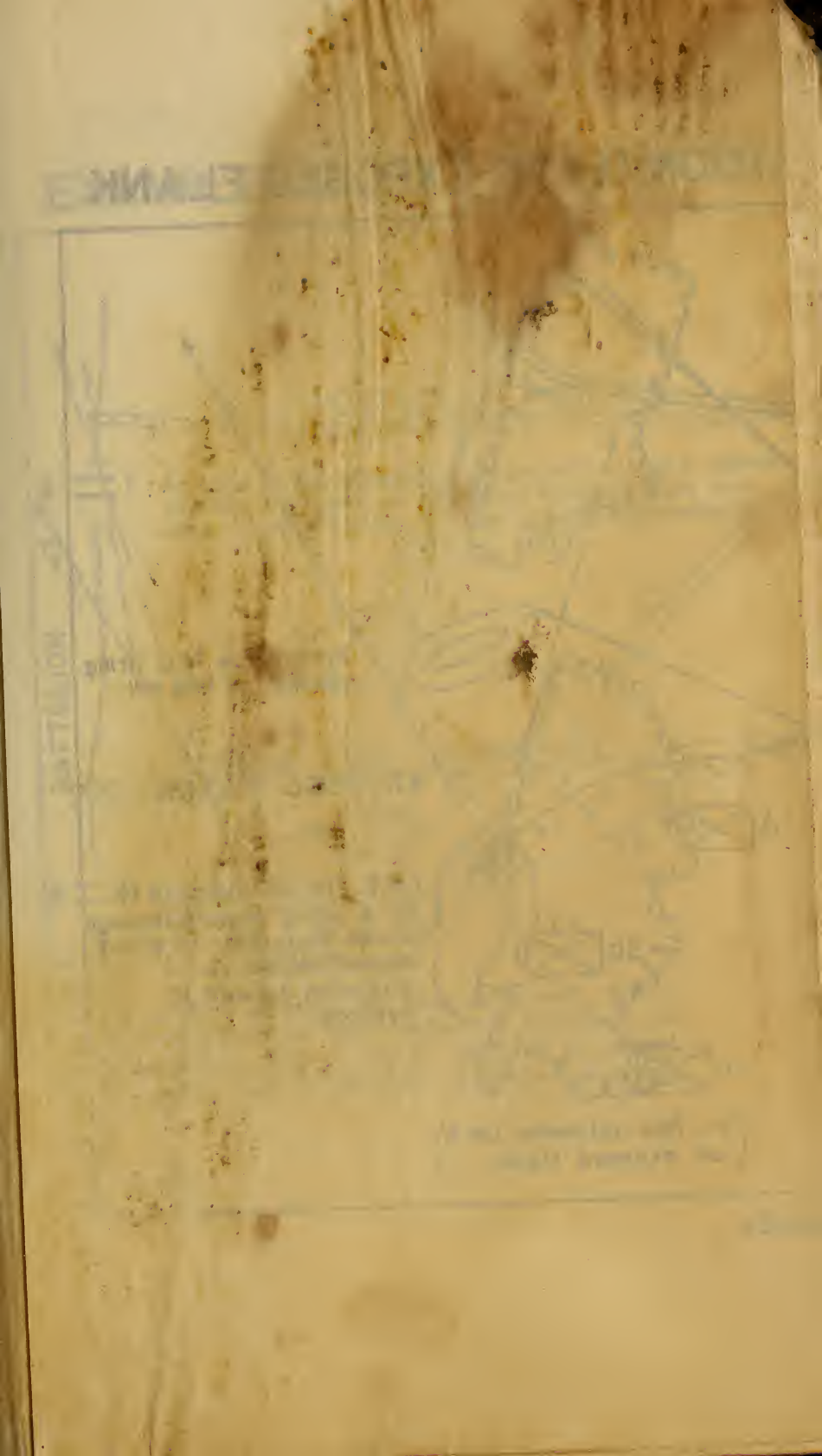


FIGURE 23

Situation.—a. Assault line is held up after attack has progressed some distance.

b. One machine-gun platoon is in direct support of each assault rifle company with the third machine-gun platoon in general support. The rear sections of the platoons in direct support are on carts, displacing forward; these are directed to occupy positions on the high ground near their respective leading sections. The third platoon, also on carts displacing forward, is attached to the reserve rifle company for the enveloping movement. Attachment is indicated in this case because the battalion commander will, to some extent, lose contact with the maneuver unit.



EXAMPLE OF AN ATTACHED PLATOON ON AN EXPOSED FLANK

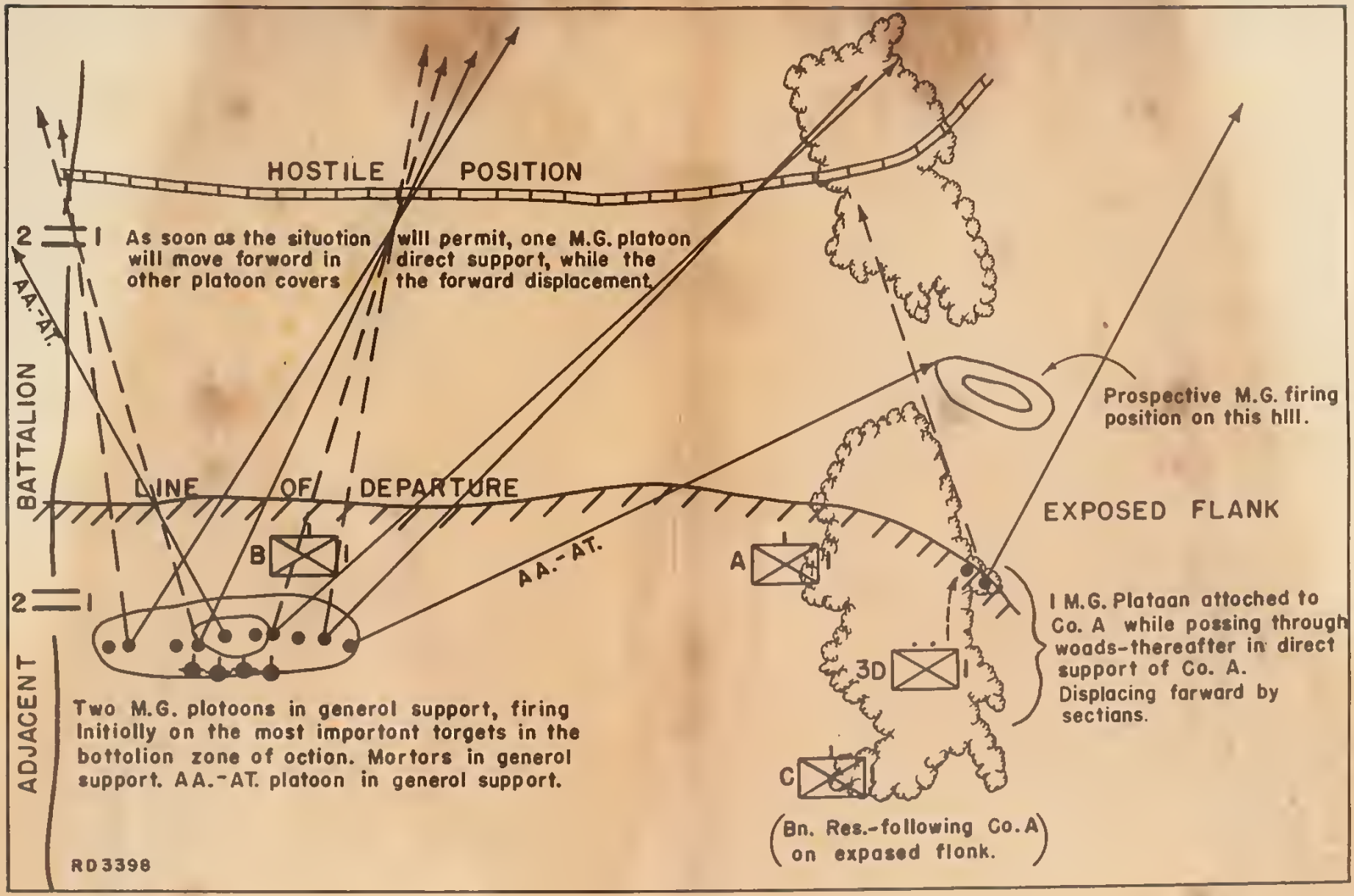


FIGURE 24.

EXAMPLE

Situation.—Resistance is uniform. The right flank is insecure and the zone of advance of the right company is heavily wooded. Under these conditions attachment of a machine-gun platoon to the right assault company is indicated by the difficulty of control and supply.

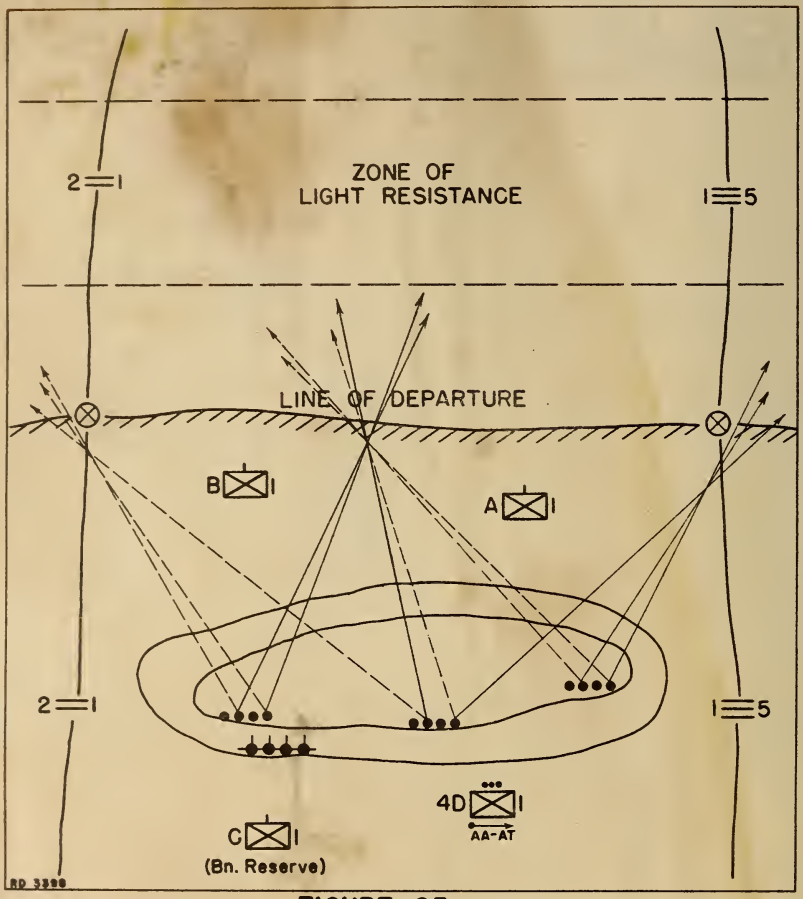


FIGURE 25

Situation.—Light resistance to be expected initially. The weapons company is in firing positions ready for prompt forward movement as the situation develops. Good firing positions suitable for machine-gun platoons to deliver supporting fire throughout the battalion zone of action are available. The mortars are in position to render support when necessary. The AA-AT platoon is held in readiness to repel mechanized counterattack, positions having been previously reconnoitered and prepared.

WEAPONS COMPANY IN GENERAL SUPPORT

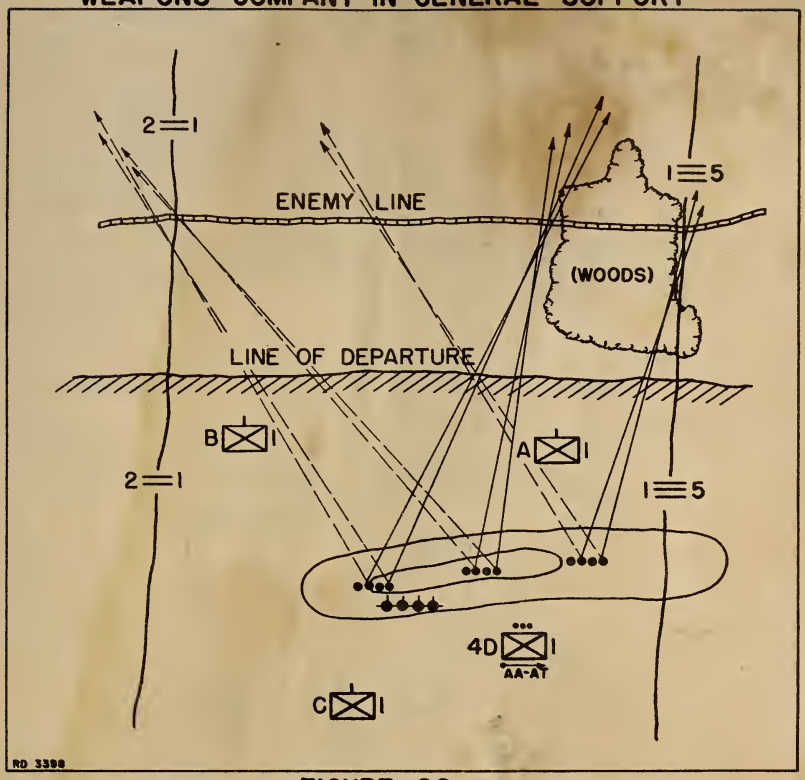


FIGURE 26

Situation.—a. Resistance is uniform. Suitable positions for the weapons company are available in the right of the battalion zone of action.

b. A fire swept zone with no cover is in front of the left assault company. The progress of the right assault company is expected to be more rapid.

c. The weapons company is located in the best position available in rear of the right assault company. This position will favor the initial advance of a machine-gun platoon closely in rear of advancing riflemen and will admit of enfilading fire on the position in front of the left assault company. The mortar platoon is in position ready to support the attack. The AA-AT platoon is held in readiness to repel mechanized counterattack.

WEAPONS COMPANY IN GENERAL SUPPORT.
NARROW ZONE OF ACTION.

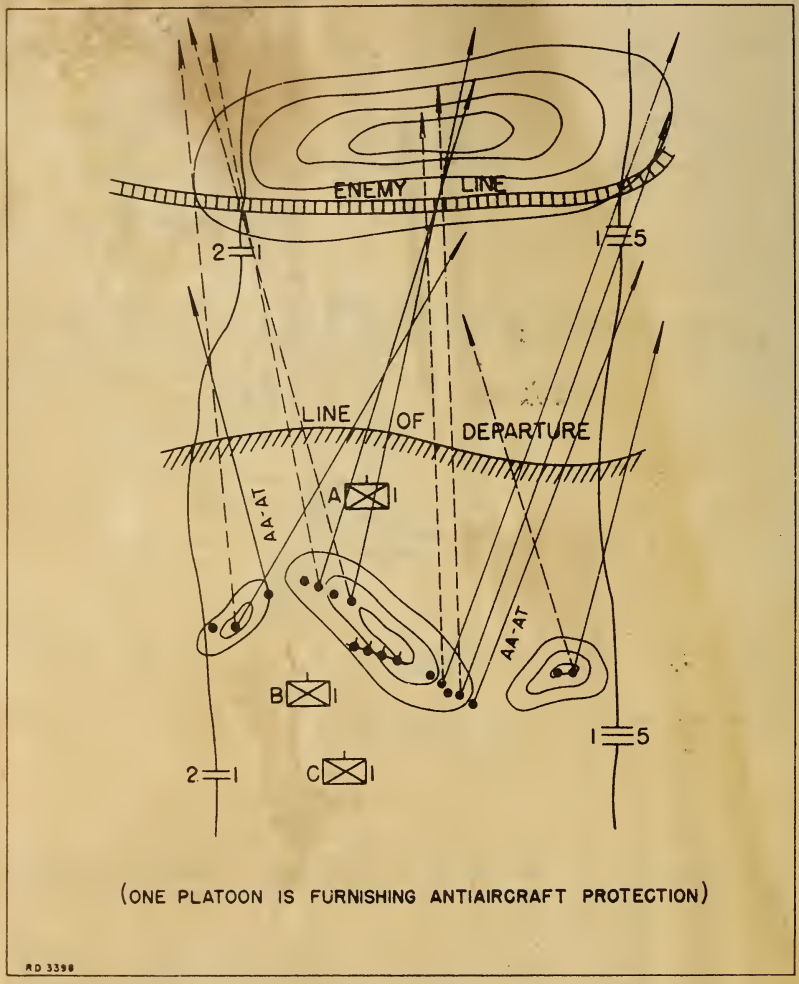


FIGURE 27

Situation.—The battalion is attacking in column of companies. The zone of action is narrow, and antiaircraft fire is necessary. The company is initially employed in general support (two machine-gun platoons executing ground missions and the third platoon prepared for antiaircraft firing). The company commander regulates the initial forward displacement of one machine-gun platoon, as directed by the battalion

commander. The first platoon to advance would move as a unit, when cover and tactical situation permit, and under the fire protection of the other platoon. The remaining platoon executing ground fire would usually displace after the first platoon is in position and can cover the advance. The antiaircraft platoon would move by section and usually independent of the remainder of the weapons company. The mortar platoon is in position prepared to support the attack. The AA-AT platoon is in position prepared to fire on enemy armored vehicles.

Situation.—a. A regiment with two battalions in assault and one in reserve, detaches the machine-gun platoons of the weapons company of the reserve battalion and places them in general support of one assault battalion.

b. The nature of the terrain is such that it admits of the employment of all machine-gun companies.

c. When antiaircraft firing is required, each assault battalion commander would designate a machine-gun platoon for such service.

EXAMPLE OF THE USE OF A WEAPONS COMPANY OF A RESERVE BATTALION IN SUPPORT OF AN ASSAULT BATTALION. DURING INITIAL STAGES OF THE ATTACK.

Weapons companies of assault battalions in general support of their battalions ae the attack progresses.

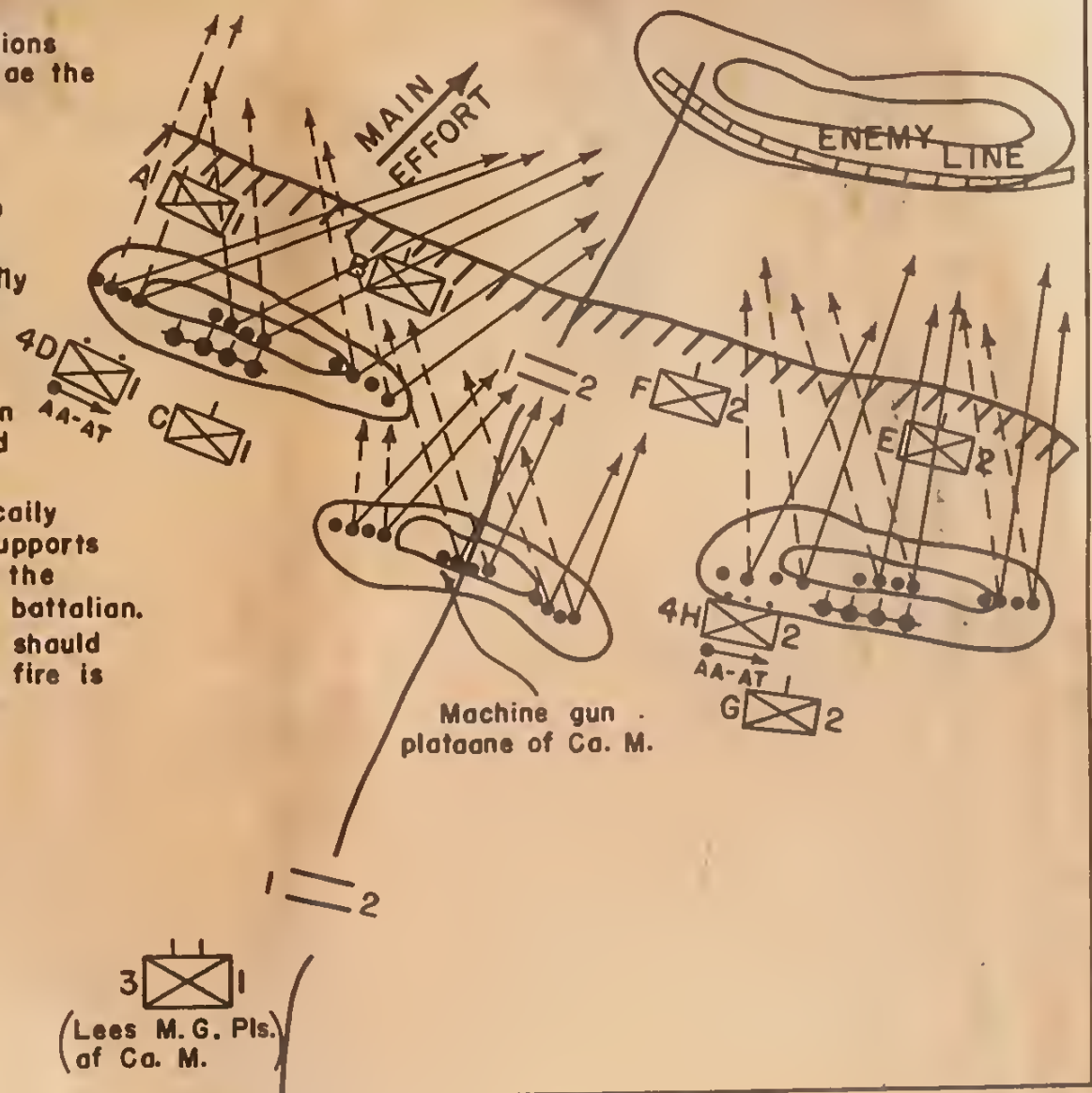
Weapone company of the reeerve battalian renders effective support to moin effort whenever practicabie.

The piace of emplayment ie nat usuafly os close to the iine of departure as that af assault battalian guns.

The positian is selected sufficiently far farward to admit lang range fire on the hastile main iine af resistance and an farward hastile dispasitione.

The campany shauld alwaye be tacticaily availiable ta its awn battalion and supports the attack from o fixed pasition an the raute af prababie advance of ite awn battalian.

The machine gun piataons af Co. M. shauld revert ta the 3rd Battalian when its fire is masked fram ite original supparting position.



RD 3398

FIGURE 28.

SECTION 11

THE BATTALION HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

217. The Battalion Headquarters Company, Composition.—The battalion headquarters company includes the battalion headquarters, company headquarters, intelligence section, supply section, medical section and communications platoon. The 115 officers and men of this company are armed with 64 rifles and 29 pistols or carbines; the medical personnel are not armed. Seven hand carts are provided for the transportation of light equipment; the communication platoon is supplied with 2 one-quarter ton trucks and 4 more such trucks are provided as weapons carriers for battalion weapons. (While these latter four trucks are assigned to the Battalion Headquarters Company and are driven by personnel of that Company, they transport the weapons of the Battalion Weapons Company.)

218. Battalion Headquarters.—a. The officers in battalion headquarters are the Battalion Commander and his staff. These staff officers are furnished to assist the commander by relieving him of time consuming and distracting details; they keep themselves continuously posted on the situation and should be ready to report, or make recommendations, both when called for and whenever any material change in the situation requires it. Each member of the staff team must be trained to take over the duties of any other member in order to organize the staff for continuous operation and to replace staff officers who become casualties or leave the command post for reconnaissance and visits.

b. The duties of Battalion Commanders, and commanders of higher units, are so complex that these staff officers are necessary to handle certain details and leave the commander free to make the major decisions and supervise the execution of his orders. The officers who make up the battalion staff, with a brief statement of their duties, appears below.

(1) **Battalion Executive Officer (Bn X).**—The executive is the principal assistant to the commander. In the temporary absence of the commander he makes any decisions needed basing them on the known wishes and policies of his commander. In order to do this, he must stay abreast of the situation and be continuously familiar with his commander's plans. The executive should stay at the command post while the commander is away. He relieves his commander of details, particularly administrative details. The executive coordinates the activities of the staff. He examines reports, plans and orders prepared by members of the staff to check their correctness, completeness, clarity and brevity. He supervises the keeping of the unit situation map.

(2) **Battalion Adjutant (Bn 1).**—The Adjutant handles all matters regarding personnel. In the field his duties may include securing personnel replacements and receiving, assigning and quartering them; securing means for recreation (working with the Chaplain and supervising non-military morale agencies); taking measures to obtain decorations, citations, honors and awards; maintains reports on strength, casualties, prisoners-of-war, enemy civilians and captured material; keeps the unit journal (under supervision of Executive); arranges the Command Post including allotment of space to the commander, staff sections and other activities, and supervises movement of the Command Post (assisted by the Communications Officer); allots spaces for camps or bivouacs; supervision of mail clerks. He must also keep in close touch with the tactical situation and the activities of other staff officers, so that he can take over their duties if necessary.

(3) **Battalion Intelligence Officer (Bn 2).**—The principle duty of the intelligence officer in combat is to obtain and distribute information of the enemy. If members of his section, or subordinate units, do not send information back, he must take corrective measures to get it. His duties specifically include those noted below:

Training of the intelligence section.

Preparation of the intelligence plan and orders (orders to his own section direct, to other units through the Battalion Plans and Training Officer).

Coordination of all information collecting agencies in the battalion and maintainance of liaison and exchange of information with subordinate, higher and neighboring units.

Recording, evaluation and interpreting information and distribution to his commander, interested staff officers and higher, subordinate and neighboring units.

Examination of enemy personnel and captured material and documents.

Procurement and issue of maps and aerial photographs.

(4) **Battalion Plans and Training Officer (Bn 3).**—The Battalion Plans and Training Officer (also called Battalion Operations Officer) is concerned primarily with training and tactical operations. His most important duties are briefly indicated below.

Assemblying facts to assist the commander in making his estimate of the situation.

Preparing plans for allocation of equipment (in coordination with the Supply Officer); assignment of replacements (in coordination with the Adjutant); security measures; continuous study of the tactical situation and preparation of tactical plans (in coordination with all other staff officers).

Preparation of operation orders and operation maps.

Planning and supervising liaison with higher, adjacent and subordinate units.

Supervises signal communications.

(5) **Battalion Supply Officer (Bn 4).**—The Battalion Supply Officer supervises the battalion supply services. He must keep in close touch with the Battalion Operations Officer, the tactical situation, subordinate commanders and their troops and all supply installations. He plans for and supervises the following:—

Procurement, storage and distribution of supplies.

Location of supply installations.

Property responsibility and accountability.

Preparation of administrative plans and paragraph 4 of written operation orders.

Cooperates with the Battalion Medical Officer in regard to medical installations and evacuation of wounded.

(6) **Battalion Medical Officer.**—The Battalion Medical Officer (Medical Corps, U.S. Navy) commands the medical section and supervises the medical service. His duties include the supervision of the instruction of the battalion in personal hygiene, field sanitation and first aid; preparation of medical plans and the location of the battalion aid station, the collection and evacuation of wounded, and related duties. He works in close cooperation with the Battalion Supply Officer.

(7) **Battalion Liaison Officers.**—Tables of Organization approved January 10, 1942, have added to Battalion Headquarters two lieutenants as Liaison Officers. These officers will be sent to other units for the purpose of promoting cooperation and coordination. A liaison officer represents his commander at the command post to which he is sent. These two officers may be sent to the Regimental Command Post to insure close contact between the regimental commander and the battalion concerned, or they may be sent to the command post of an adjacent unit. Their addition to the Battalion Staff marks a step forward in the constant and continuous attempt to secure coordination of action between all elements of a large command in order that the scheme of maneuver of the commander may be carried out.

c. In addition to the officers named above the Battalion Communication Officer and the Commander of the Weapons Company also act as staff officers in addition to their command duties, while the Battalion Adjutant and the Medical officers, in addition to their staff duties command, respectively, the Headquarters Company and the Medical Section, (one doctor being the commander of the section and the other his assistant).

d. The enlisted personnel in Battalion Headquarters includes the Sergeant Major and three clerks, two cooks, four truck drivers and two for miscellaneous duties.

e. When the battalion is committed to an attack the distribution of the personnel of Battalion Headquarters would be approximately as shown below:

Battalion Commander at the Command Post or Observation Post depending on the situation.

Intelligence Officer, and Plans and Training Officer, at Battalion Observation Posts.

Battalion Executive, Adjutant, Sergeant Major, clerks, and extra men at the Command Post.

Battalion Supply Officer probably at the Battalion Ammunition Distributing Point.

Two medical officers at the Battalion Aid Station.

Liaison officers performing such duties as may have been directed.

Truck drivers would be with their vehicles, probably under cover close behind the weapons they are assigned to transport.

The cooks would be with the kitchen section in a rear area.

219. **Company Headquarters.**—a. Company Headquarters is organized in the usual manner to care for the needs of the entire Headquarters Company; its personnel includes a First Sergeant and necessary clerks, a Mess Sergeant and necessary cooks, a Supply Sergeant, two Field Musics and other miscellaneous personnel. It functions directly under the Battalion Adjutant.

b. When the battalion is committed to an attack the distribution of the personnel of Company Headquarters would be approximately as shown below:

First Sergeant with two field musics at the Command Post.

Mess Sergeant and cooks with the kitchen section.

Supply sergeant, clerks and miscellaneous personnel with the rear echelon.

220. **Intelligence Section.**—a. The Intelligence Section includes personnel especially trained as scouts, observers and draftsmen. They work directly under the Battalion Intelligence Officer in the collection and recording of information of the enemy.

b. When the battalion is committed to an attack the distribution of the personnel of the Intelligence Section would be approximately as shown below:

At Battalion Observation Posts, the observers.

At the Battalion Command Post, the Platoon Sergeant, draftsman, clerk and one scout.

With each of the three rifle companies, one scout.

221. **Supply Section.**—a. The Supply Section is composed of six enlisted men who work under the direct supervision of the Battalion Supply Officer. It should be noted that this section is provided with no means for transporting supplies and equipment. Their duties are primarily administrative, such as preparing requisitions, receiving and accounting for supplies, equipment and rations and preparing them for distribution to the elements of the battalion. It is the duty of higher units in the chain of supply to actually move the material forward and deliver it to the Battalion Supply Section. This is what is meant when it is said that "the impetus of supply is from the rear." Having received the material, this section, assisted by the supply personnel of the companies, effects its proper distribution. During combat its primary function is to obtain necessary ammunition and make it available to the companies.

b. When the battalion is committed to an attack the distribution of the personnel of this section would be approximately as shown below:

Battalion Ammunition Distributing Point, four men.

Rear Echelon, two men.

222. **Medical Section.**—a. The Medical Section has, besides the two medical officers on the battalion staff, twenty enlisted men of the Navy Medical Corps.

b. When the battalion is committed to an attack the distribution of the personnel of this section would be approximately as follows:

With each company of the battalion two men to act as Company Aid Station. Remainder at the Battalion Aid Station to care for casualties or serving as stretcher bearers.

223. **Communication Platoon.**—a. The Communications Platoon is the largest subdivision of the Battalion Headquarters Company and is in turn divided into Platoon Headquarters, Message Center and Messenger Section, Wire Section, and Radio, visual and panel section.

b. The commander of this platoon acts as adviser to the battalion commander on matters relating to signal communication and the establishment of the command post. He is frequently required to prepare communications plans to meet changing conditions, and to write paragraph 5 of written operation orders.

c. When the battalion is committed to an attack the Communication Platoon would be approximately as shown below:

Platoon Headquarters: at the Battalion Command Post.

Message Center and Messenger Section; Operating the message center at the Battalion Command Post.

Wire Section: Operate the switchboard at the Command Post, lay and service wire lines and install and operate other wire communication as required.

Radio, Visual and Panel Section: Some operate the panel station for communication with aircraft (should be close to the Command Post), the remainder man and operate the radio equipment provided.

224. **Summary of Approximate Distribution.**—A tabulation of the preceding paragraphs showing the approximate distribution of the personnel of Battalion Headquarters Company when the battalion is committed to combat appears below. These are approximate only, all personnel go where they may be needed according to the situation and orders from higher authority. However, the need for cover and concealment, considered in connection with the number of persons involved, will give an idea of the space that each of the activities named will occupy.

Battalion Observation Posts: 3 officers, 5 enlisted. (The commanders of the Weapons Company and Reserve Company, together with Artillery Liaison officer, each with additional personnel, may also be present in some of the Battalion Observation Posts.)

Battalion Command Post: 3 officers, 53 enlisted. (Divided into groups as follows: Command group, Intelligence group, Message Center, Switchboard, Radio, Panel, Vehicle Park, etc. Some personnel would be absent laying and servicing wire lines. In addition there would be present 8 additional runners; two from each company.)

Battalion Aid Station: 2 officers, 12 enlisted.

Battalion Ammunition Distributing Point: 1 officer and 4 enlisted, plus ammunition vehicles with their drivers.

Kitchen Section: 5 enlisted, plus vehicles and their drivers.

Rear Echelon: 10 enlisted.

Other: Liaison Officers; where duties require (Total 2). Truck drivers (Weapons Carriers); with vehicles (Total 4). One scout from Intelligence Section with each rifle company (Total 3).

Two medical aid men with each company (Total 8).

Total Headquarters Company (T.O. 1942) 115.

225. **Detailed Duties.**—A discussion of the detailed duties of the personnel of Battalion Headquarters Company (such as a study of Staff Principles and Functions, or the technique of employment of the Communications Platoon) is beyond the

scope of this text. The subject has been presented here very briefly in order to show the relationship of the Headquarters Company to the rest of the battalion.

SECTION 12

THE MARINE INFANTRY BATTALION

226. The Marine Infantry Battalion.—The component parts of the Marine Infantry Battalion (the Headquarters Company, the Weapons Company and the three Rifle Companies) have been described and their use in the attack discussed in the preceding parts of this text. This section will deal briefly with the battalion in the route march, the approach march, launching an attack and the conduct of the attack. The discussion is primarily to illustrate the use made by the Battalion Commander of the various elements making up the battalion.

227. Advance in Route Column.—An assault battalion advances in route column until the situation requires a change of formation. A battalion advancing as part of a regiment or larger force generally marches in march formation with its units in the following order: Battalion headquarters (including the headquarters company), rifle companies, weapons company. The ammunition, medical, and sometimes the kitchen vehicles of the battalions are usually grouped together and march at the rear of the foot elements of each regiment. This formation may be varied to meet threatened air attacks. Companies may march with increased distances and machine-gun sections, or platoons may be distributed throughout the column, including the trains. Air guards are provided along the route of march from which they can observe the approach of hostile aircraft and promptly transmit warning to the command. Warning may be given by use of pyrotechnics, relayed visual signals, by voice, or bursts of fire. When a battalion is advancing in a separate column, the battalion commander provides his own advance guard and flank security. He may send out additional patrols to maintain contact with other columns, to determine areas which are under fire, to ascertain when changes of direction or formation will be necessary, or to develop the enemy position. The advance guard will drive off hostile patrols, and overcome advance posts.

228. Position of Battalion Commander in Route March.—Throughout the advance into action, the battalion commander is at the head, or in advance, of the leading company of his main body. Whenever the situation permits he personally reconnoiters well in advance of his battalion. The march of the battalion is conducted by the executive officer when the battalion commander is absent.

229. March Discipline.—Rigid march discipline is maintained during the advance in route column. The battalion will often be required to advance for considerable distances over difficult

490276 O - 42 - 13

terrain, under cover of darkness, and through woods. The battalion commander is responsible that the battalion remains intact and advances in the prescribed direction.

230. **Trains and Ammunition Supply.**—a. During the advance in route column while the battalion is moving as part of the regiment, the trains, ammunition and medical, and such vehicles which the battalion commander may otherwise specify, are grouped, and move by bounds at the tail of the regimental column. This does not include vehicles providing antiaircraft protection nor the vehicles used in regulating the movement. Ammunition and medical vehicles marching at the rear of the regimental column are subject to the call of the battalion commander. The kitchen vehicles usually remain under control of the regiment or higher commander. As soon as the battalion leaves the regimental column its ammunition and medical vehicles join and revert to the control of the battalion commander. If the battalion is acting alone the kitchen section is kept within supporting distance of the battalion. The rear echelon of the battalion marches with the kitchen section.

b. The ammunition supply of the battalion is coordinated by the Bn-4, and executed with the assistance of an ammunition detail provided by the battalion headquarters from available units using the transportation provided in the ammunition train.

231. **Reconnaissance in Route March.**—From the instant the battalion moves forward in its own zone of advance toward the area of small arms fire, the battalion commander directs the necessary measures for reconnaissance and security. Reconnaissance is conducted to locate shelled areas, concealed and covered routes of advance, and to ascertain the progress of the adjacent units. Covering detachments are detailed to protect the front and flanks of the battalion during the advance and to develop the enemy position in the zone of action. In the exceptional case when the battalion is acting alone and other transportation facilities are not available, the battalion commander must not hesitate to use any available transportation from his headquarters detachment for more distant reconnaissance.

232. **Covering Detachments in Route March.**—The covering detachments deal with hostile patrols and advanced posts which have not been cleaned up by the covering detachments of the larger units (regiment, or division) or which have succeeded in passing through them. The battalion commander maintains close touch with his covering detachments by means of messengers. The strength of the battalion covering detachment is increased when the front is not covered by detachments from higher units.

233. **Battalion in the Approach March.**—That phase of the advance to battle when a large unit abandons the route column formation and breaks up into a number of small columns advancing on a broad front, and before enemy fires force an actual deployment, is known as the approach march. The approach march is said to be **covered** when it is executed behind forces sufficiently strong to insure effective protection against enemy ground attack. It is said to be **uncovered** when the advancing unit is unprotected by other troops, or when, by reason of the situation, the elements in front cannot be relied upon for adequate protection. The **covered** approach march offers but few tactical difficulties and may normally be performed in route column formation, it will not be discussed further in this section. The **uncovered** approach march offers more tactical difficulties and the battalion itself must provide for its own security. The order of march for an **uncovered** battalion is ordinarily as follows:

1 rifle company with attached platoon of MGs.
Distance 600-1,000 yards.
1 rifle company.
1 antitank gun.
1 detail from the communications platoon.
1 rifle company.
1 weapons company (less detachments).
1 antitank gun.
Distance variable, not in excess of 1,000 yards.
Attached antiaircraft weapons, field artillery and tanks.
Distance, not in excess of 1,000 yards.
Medical detachment.
Battalion Trains (if not detached).

Where danger of attack from the flank or rear exists, rifle and antitank elements may be distributed throughout the column.

234. **Advance by Bounds.**—The advance guard of such a battalion (the leading company) moves by bounds on successive objectives as designated by the battalion commander. Each bound is directed upon a terrain feature of importance to the security of the battalion or to its eventual combat mission. According to orders received upon reaching an objective the advance guard prepares to continue their advance, deploy defensively on a broad front to cover elements in rear, or launch an attack. Each bound is preceded by a reconnaissance of the objective. Distance between objectives depends on the terrain, preferably battalion bounds will be from 1,000 to 1,200 yards. Leading rifle units (the advance guard) progress in extended order, reconnoitering so as to prevent elements other than patrols being taken under surprise fire by infantry weapons. So far as practicable they

utilize terrain difficult for tank movements and send only weak elements into open areas which constitute favorable routes of approach for tanks.

235. **Conduct of the Approach March.**—a. During the advance of the battalion in the approach formation within its assigned zone, terrain features which are favorable as lines of departure and firing positions are selected successively along the axis of movement and reconnoitered. The route of advance is so selected within the assigned zone that the battalion marches toward its successive direction points in such a manner that it will be able to deploy for attack on favorable points of the terrain whenever the situation requires.

b. The direction of the advance should be such as to take advantage of available concealed and covered routes within the zone of advance. The battalion commander prescribes the advance of his battalion by assigning successive direction points or azimuths to his base company. Where practicable, changes in direction are communicated to the other companies. Distances and intervals are increased when crossing ridges or other prominent terrain lines which cannot be avoided. At times, when they can be approached under cover, it may be advisable to cross particularly dangerous places (roads, crests, embankments) by surprise with whole companies at a time. The units take care not to debouch from cover at the same point. The line or dangerous area may be crossed by successive rushes or by individuals widely separated. The unit reforms on a designated line of advance. Temporary variations in distances and intervals, as required by the terrain or the situation, are made by company commanders on their own initiative. The battalion commander is responsible that suitable measures are adopted to reduce the effectiveness of enemy aerial activity.

When it becomes necessary to advance under the protection of its own fire, the battalion deploys for attack. In some cases the battalion commander may assign complete or partial attack missions to his companies before taking up the approach formation. Usually, however, he plans to direct the approach march of his battalion to the most advanced position at which it can be formed for the attack under cover prior to entering the zone of effective small-arms fire, before issuing his attack order. The supporting weapons are disposed so as to render prompt support to the advance of the assaulting units as soon as the assaulting units emerge from cover.

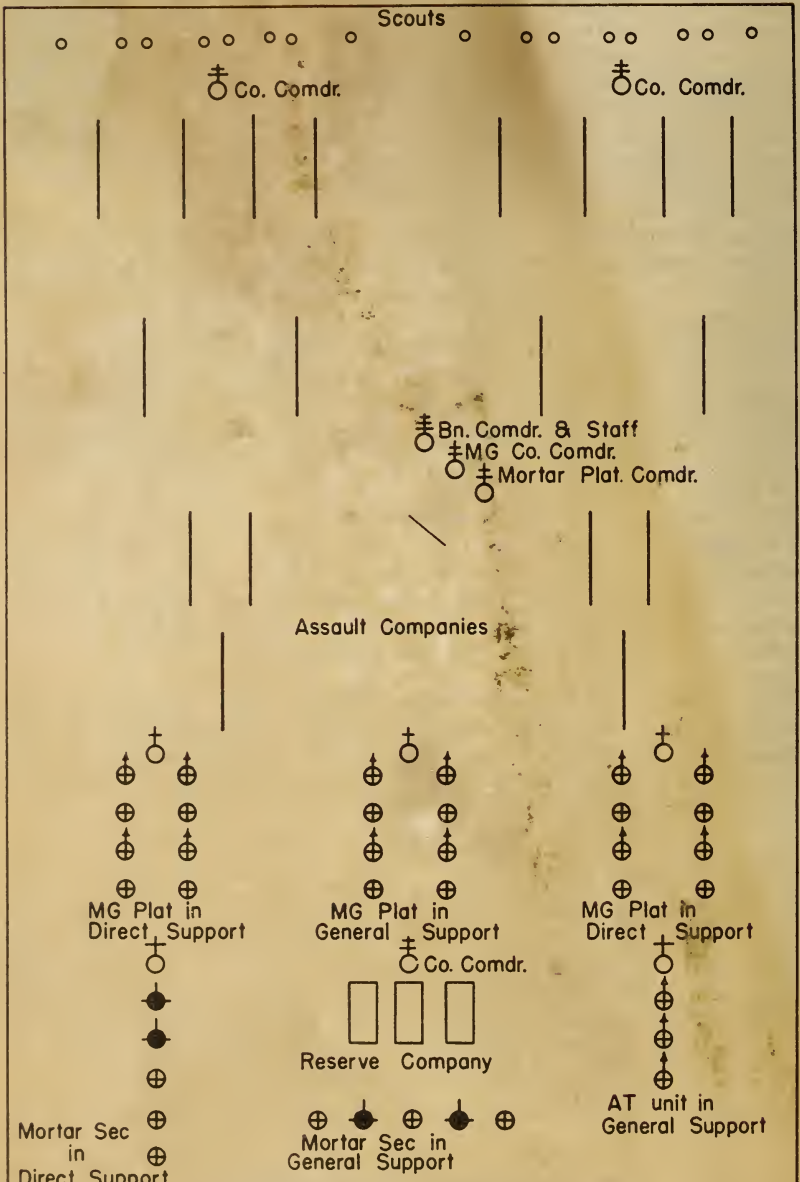
236. **Organic Infantry Weapons in the Approach March.**—The position of the machine guns and mortars in the approach march formation depends upon the probability of early action of these weapons and the suitability of the terrain for their use. Although they are disposed so as to be readily available for prompt action, nevertheless they are not to be unnecessarily exposed to probable destruction by a sudden opening

of enemy fire within effective range. Infantry weapons advance by echelon and by bounds and take up successive positions covering the advance of the infantry units whenever such protection is advisable. If terrain conditions permit, weapons should always be transported as far forward as practicable on their carts. Antitank guns in the approach march will normally be held mobile, prepared for rapid forward displacement to cover tank approaches from the front and flanks during the initial stages of the attack.

237. **Reconnaissance During the Approach March.**—The battalion commander conducts constant personal reconnaissance with a view to maintaining the prescribed direction of the advance, selecting successive positions, and determining favorable routes. Whenever practicable, shelled areas are avoided. When the battalion commander leaves the battalion for purposes of reconnaissance, the communication personnel and messengers maintain contact between the battalion commander and his command post. Portable voice radio sets should be used for this purpose when radio silence is not required.

238. **Orders for the Approach March.**—In developing his battalion, the battalion commander assigns the direction of the advance, designates the base company, and prescribes the formation. As a rule the battalion extends on the leading company. The extension is generally best effected by changes of direction of the heads of the companies.

239. **Formation in Approach March.**—The formation will depend upon the situation at the time of the deployment. If sufficient information is available, the companies are formed in echelons corresponding to the echelons in which they will deploy for attack. Otherwise they are disposed in a formation affording maximum security against losses and adapted to forming for attack in any direction. If adjacent units are not abreast, exposed flanks may be most effectively protected by a formation in which the flanks of the battalion are echeloned to the rear. For example: One rifle company in advance, and two rifle companies to the right or left rear of the leading company, the machine-gun company and mortar platoon in rear of the leading company. The position of the battalion commander is near the head of the battalion. (For an approach march formation see Figure 29.)



DIAGRAMATIC SKETCH
BATTALION IN APPROACH MARCH

RD 3398

FIGURE 29

240. Assembly Areas.—Before complete deployment is effected the battalion generally pauses in an **assembly area** where the final plans are made, extra ammunition issued and detailed orders for the attack given to each unit. In a long advance the battalion may successively occupy several assembly areas. The final assembly area must not lie beyond the last cover affording protection from hostile small arms fire, and should afford cover from both ground and aerial observation. It should be within effective range of the objective for Heavy Weapons to organize a Base of Fire. In the selection of assembly areas consideration should also be given to the protection offered by the terrain against enemy mechanized attack. There should be an observation point in close vicinity affording a clear field of view over the terrain to be crossed by the battalion in making its attack.

An ideal assembly area is one which affords protection from hostile small arms fire, cover and concealment; is in rear of the projected zone of action; is large enough to accommodate the battalion without crowding; affords natural protection from mechanized attack, and is provided with routes of communication to the rear.

Each company is assigned a portion of the assembly area keeping in mind the scheme of maneuver and formation to be used in making the attack. Security details are posted as ordered and arrangements made for defense against possible enemy air or mechanized attacks. Extra ammunition is issued from ammunition vehicles; if practicable they move from company area to company area for this purpose, otherwise they discharge their ammunition at the point designated by the battalion supply officer. During this period the subordinates are assembled and the battalion commander issues his final attack order.

241. Development of the Plan.—The commander of any unit when confronted with a situation must follow a logical method of reasoning as to the action he is to take. This reasoning can be expressed in five definite steps taken in the following sequence:

(1) The commander must first make an estimate of the situation.

(2) As a result of this situation, he arrives at a decision as to what action is to be taken to meet the situation.

(3) He must evolve a plan for putting his decision into effect.

(4) His plan is then conveyed to his subordinates by means of orders.

(5) His final step is supervision to insure the execution of the orders in accordance with his plans.

Even where his mission and general course of action has been prescribed by higher authority, he still follows the

logical course of reasoning outlined below, within the scope, of course, of the orders given to him by the commanding officer.

241½. **Estimate of the Situation.**—a. Before the commander of a unit can begin to work toward the execution of a mission assigned to him he must study what is to be done; the capabilities of his unit; the capabilities of the opposing factors (enemy and terrain); the courses of action open to him; the best course of action. This process of thought naturally divides itself into six factors, as follows:

(1) What am I to do? (Mission.)

(2) What have I to do it with? (Own capabilities.)

(3) What advantages and disadvantages does the terrain offer? (The terrain over which I must operate.)

(4) What can the enemy do to stop me? (Enemy capabilities.)

(5) What are the best ways in which I can carry out my mission?

(6) Which is the best way? (Decision.)

b. The decision arrived at by carefully analyzing the above factors should answer the following questions:

What he is going to do.

How he is going to do it.

When he is going to do it.

Where he is going to do it.

Why he is going to do it.

These five elements are the components of the decision and once a clear decision is made, the commander is able to make his plans, issue his orders, and carry out his decision.

c. The following example of a decision is furnished for the information of the student and has resulted from specific situations.

WHAT: To Attack.

WHEN: At H Hour (or on signal).

HOW: Envelope the Enemy's

WHERE: East (left) flank.

WHY: To drive him Northwest.

For complete details see text "Estimate of the Situation and Operation Plans and Orders" Marine Corps Schools.

242. **Plans of Attack.**—Having received a definite mission from higher authority, made an estimate of the situation and arrived at a decision, the battalion commander must then make his plan. This plan is made in detail only so far as he can reasonably estimate the hostile capabilities; often it will only involve a simple combination of fire and movement for the capture of ground in sight of the troops. (When observation of the terrain is impossible, the plan may initially con-

sider only a direction of attack and objectives.) **The primary thing to be decided is where the main effort of the battalion is to be made, the company to be charged therewith, and the fire support to be given to it.** Having made this decision each assault company must be given initial positions, direction of attack and objectives. Reserve units must be assigned an initial location and contemplated direction of advance. The platoons of the Weapons Company must be assigned their specific combat missions, including first firing positions and initial targets, target areas or sectors of fire. Plans must also be made to cover the forward displacement of these weapons as the attack progresses.

243. **Base of Fire.**—The battalion supporting weapons support the forward movement of the assault elements in making their attack. These weapons are generally placed in rear of the assault units, or to a flank, so that their fires can be delivered with maximum effectiveness in support of the main effort of the battalion. This grouping of weapons is called a **base of fire.**

Bases of fire are located on successive terrain lines as the advance continues; each of the terrain lines becomes the objective of one bound of movement and the location of the base of fire for the next. Distances between successive objectives should be within range of the supporting weapons of the unit concerned. (See paragraph 234.)

Figure 30 immediately following illustrates the fires of some of the important weapons of the battalion, the battalion base of fire as well as the lighter weapons of the rifle companies.

The success or failure of the attack will depend largely on the skill with which the commander employs his base of fire, either that organically a part of his battalion, or that which has been designated to assist him by a higher headquarters. The bulk of this supporting fire is given to assist the main attack of the battalion; but a portion must be assigned the holding attack. The battalion commander's plan must not only provide for the most effective support possible, but throughout the conduct of the attack he keeps so closely in contact with the situation as to be able to anticipate the needs of his assault companies, and either to order fire by his organic units, or to request fire from other supporting weapons, such as artillery, to meet most effectively the problems which arise.

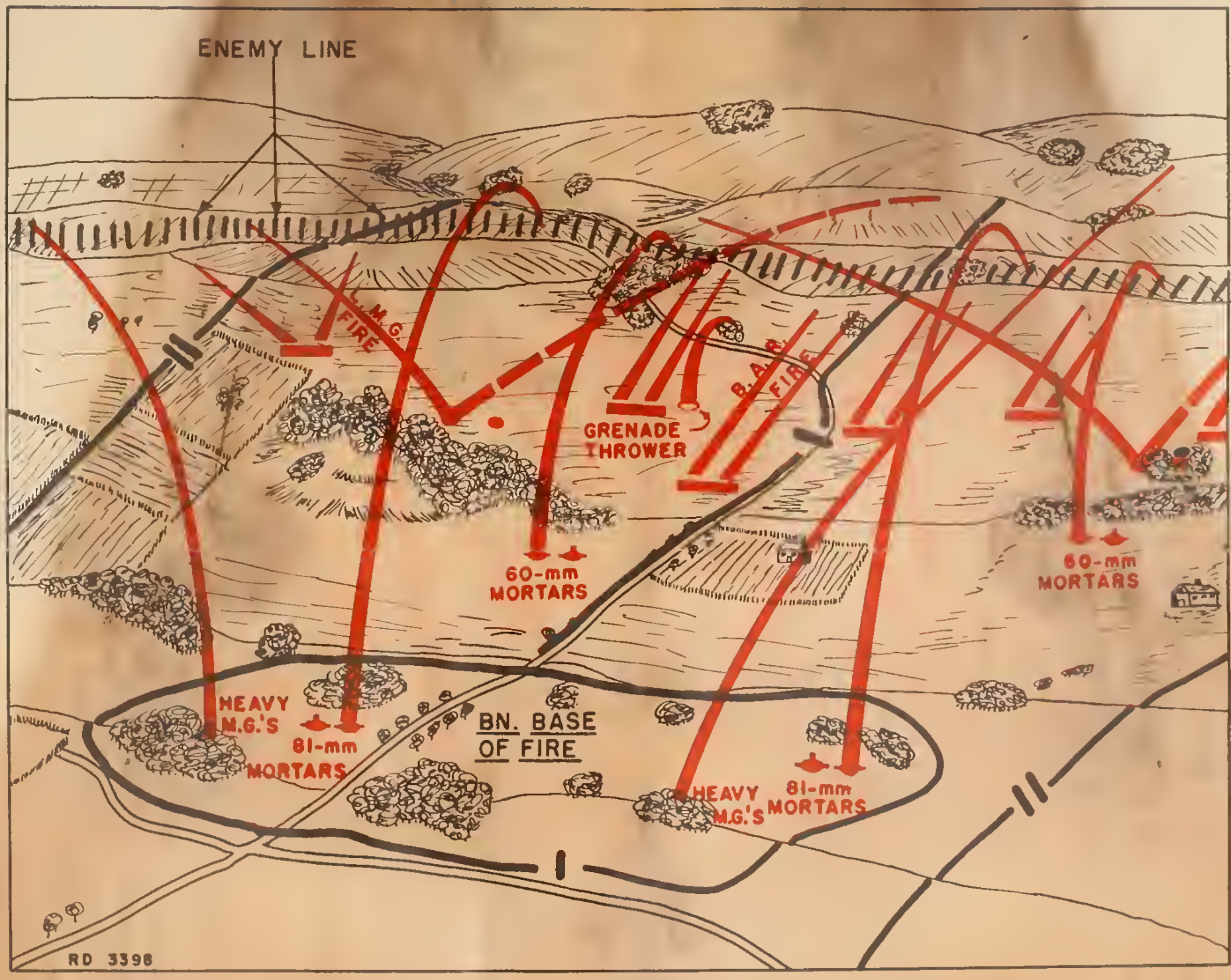

ENEMY LINE
L.M.G. FIRE
B.A.R. FIRE
GRENADE THROWER
60-mm MORTARS
60-mm MORTARS
HEAVY M.G.'S
81-mm MORTARS
BN. BASE OF FIRE
HEAVY M.G.'S
81-mm MORTARS
RD 3398

FIGURE 30

244. **Zones of Action.**—a. The determination of the width of the zone of action of the battalion depends upon many considerations. The mission, strength, terrain, form of attack, supporting fires, communication, condition of troops and characteristics of the enemy are some of the many factors that affect this decision. The variables are of such a nature as to render it difficult, and in some respects undesirable, to set definite limits for maximum and minimum figures.

b. The assignment of a zone of action does not, in itself, determine the formation to be adopted, nor the scheme of maneuver of the battalion. The battalion is not spread evenly across its entire zone. Some portions of the hostile front may not be attacked at all by maneuvering troops, but only by fire.

245. **Attack Formations.**—a. The formation to be adopted for the attack depends upon the following factors:

(1) The width of the zone.
(2) Hostile dispositions, known or suspected.
(3) Form of attack, (penetration or envelopment).
(4) Cover and concealment.
(5) Depth of penetration or envelopment.
(6) Supporting fires.
(7) Desirable strength of reserve.

b. The battalion may attack in one of the following three formations:

(1) Two rifle companies in assault and one in reserve. This formation is more frequently used than others, since it affords a strong initial attack, and the possibility of strong exploitation.

(2) One rifle company in assault and two in reserve. Those in reserve may either be deployed in column, or echeloned to one flank or another. Such a formation is suitable for an attack in a narrow zone which requires a deep penetration; or a flank; or where the enemy situation is obscure.

(3) Three assault companies (less a small fraction in reserve) abreast. This formation is appropriate where it is desired to strike a heavy initial blow over a wide front, such as in a holding attack and when a deep penetration is not contemplated.

c. The battalion commander may give exceptionally to each assault company a zone of action by the designation of boundary lines or he may direct them to operate in a definite portion of the battalion zone. **More frequently he will simply designate an objective and a direction of attack by azimuth or otherwise, from an initial position for each assault company.** It usually is not desirable to restrict maneuver of companies by the assignment of definite boundary lines. Companies should

be permitted to change their direction of attack to avoid dangerous areas and to take better advantage of cover and concealment without being restricted by boundary lines.

d. In some cases, as in rapid pursuit, the advance may be covered by an advance-guard company which advances on a broad front and endeavors to hold the enemy in position by its fire while the other companies move forward and execute enveloping movements.

e. In the attack of an enemy in position, however, the duties of the covering detachments are limited to securing the march of the battalion and developing the enemy position. The battalion commander retains in his own hands the power of engaging his battalion according to a definite plan of action and does not allow the companies to become involved in a planless action initiated by the advance detachments.

246. Terrain.—a. The terrain exercises an important and often a decisive influence in tactical situations. It usually dictates the dispositions of infantry units and their plan of maneuver or defense plan. Small infantry units have only a limited latitude in the choice of terrain operations. They must make the best possible use of the terrain of the zone of action or sector to which they are assigned. Minor detours in approach and in the displacement of reserves and supporting weapons are permissible to take advantage of cover in adjacent zones cleared by the advance of neighboring units. Especially exposed areas in both attack and defense may be left vacant to be covered by flanking fires or the long-range fires of supporting weapons.

b. Gently sloping open terrain permits full use of the flanking action of flat-trajectory infantry weapons and hence increases the power of the defense against infantry attack. Conversely such terrain offers little cover to attacking foot troops but favors tank attack. Strong tank or artillery support is required to permit infantry to attack successfully over such terrain without severe losses.

c. Broken terrain limits the defender's field of observation and flat-trajectory fire and offers cover by which attacking foot troops may approach a hostile position; it tends to contract defensive dispositions and reduce distribution in depth. Broken terrain makes difficult the battlefield control by commanders of all but the small infantry units and renders artillery support of the attack difficult and comparatively ineffective. Defensive positions located on terrain of this character require increased density of occupation of forward defensive areas and an increased allotment of curved-trajectory weapons.

d. Rolling terrain affording some cover and facilities for observation is the most favorable for attacking foot troops. Crests, ridges, woods, or other features which extend generally

parallel to the direction of advance divide the terrain into corridors which are natural avenues of penetration. Assignment of a tactical unit to each corridor enables attacking units to make direct provision for dealing with hostile elements capable of bringing fire on troops of the unit. Ridge lines perpendicular to the direction of advance permit an attacker to deal successively with elements of the hostile position, so that only a relatively small area need be neutralized at one time. During the advance these crests offer the attacker facilities for observation and fire, as well as shelter behind which he may reorganize his units and reconstitute his supporting fires. Movement across ridge lines must be carefully planned, as leading elements of the attacking troops are particularly visible to the enemy at the moment that their supporting fires tend to become least effective. The visible horizon will therefore usually indicate the limit of an infantry maneuver phase and often constitutes an initial objective. Bands of wooded terrain parallel to the front have a similar effect.

e. Conspicuous terrain features, such as isolated knolls, small woods or thickets, farm houses, roads, lanes, and other conspicuous objects, which may serve as readily designated targets or reference points for hostile artillery fire should be avoided. Long, narrow terrain compartments which lead in the general direction of a defensive area form advantageous corridors for attack. Troops advancing within such a corridor are defiladed from direct hostile fire from outside the corridor, especially from the direct fire of flat-trajectory weapons. Activity within the corridor may also be defiladed to a greater or lesser extent from ground observation from points outside the corridor.

247. Battalion Attack Orders.—a. The plan having been decided upon the commander issues his orders to his subordinate commanders. If time permits the subordinates are assembled at an observation point overlooking the terrain over which they must attack, and a regulation five paragraph combat order is issued. If circumstances do not permit this procedure, the orders are sent to those concerned, and may be fragmentary. In its totality the orders cover: (Paragraph numbers are indicated by figures in parenthesis.)

(1) Information relative to the enemy. Situation and missions of friendly troops; adjacent units; supporting artillery, tanks, and aviation; covering troops.

(2) Battalion plan of action, objectives, zone of action, line of departure, direction of attack, hour of attack. Assignment of rifle companies to attacking echelon and reserve; objectives and missions.

(3) Base of fire: general position area of heavy weapons; target areas or sectors of fire. Antitank measures; mission of antitank units.

(4) Supply: disposition of company carriers and unit trains; establishment of initial ammunition point; method of distribution of ammunition and other combat supplies. Initial location of aid station; distribution of medical section.

(5) Communications; initial command and observation posts and message center; telephone and radio; light wire local systems; panel stations and dropping grounds; signal light conventions.

248. **Responsibility of the Battalion Commander in the Attack.**—If the battalion be one of several in the first line, the battalion commander, in executing his part of the attack, pushes his battalion forward as a coordinated team as vigorously as possible within the assigned zone of action. The great degree of independence allowed him as to details demands, in turn, the exercise of good judgement on his part. Better leadership, better troops, inequality in the hostile resistance, and more favorable terrain enables one battalion to advance more rapidly in attack than another. A battalion so favored assists the further advance of the others.

249. **Conduct of the Attack.**—a. During the attack the advance of the assaulting companies is mainly in the hands of the assaulting company, platoon, and squad commanders, who advance the attack by mutual fire support and alternate fire and movement. The battalion commander intervenes only when necessary to push forward companies which hesitate and to insure the necessary cooperation between rifle companies and the supporting weapons. He arranges for mutual support with adjacent units when the situation demands such action.

b. The danger of an uncontrolled merging of the battalion reserve with the assaulting companies is particularly to be guarded against when the assaulting companies are checked in front of a hostile strong point, powerfully organized. In this case, reinforcement is generally ineffective, and an outflanking or enveloping movement is necessary.

250. **Flank Protection During the Attack.**—a. Throughout the advance the battalion commander anticipates possible counterattacks and directs the necessary reconnaissance and security measures to detect and check any menace against his flanks. He employs machine guns to protect exposed flanks. It is the special duty of units not engaged to be prepared to act immediately in the threatened direction. The machine guns and mortars should have mobility of action and be able to change the direction of their fire to meet any threat against the flanks. Dangerous localities must be specially watched and from time to time during the advance the reserve company should be posted in a position from which it can effectively protect the flanks of the battalion by fire or movement or both.

b. It is frequently necessary during the advance to send out combat patrols from the reserve company:

(1) To cover an interval between the battalion and neighboring units.

(2) To protect the flanks of the battalion when the neighboring battalion is checked in its advance.

(3) To bring oblique or enfilade fire against elements of the defense holding up the advance of the neighboring battalion.

251. Duties of the Battalion Commander During the Attack.—a. The principal duties of the battalion commander are:

(1) To employ the battalion weapons in support of the advance of the assaulting companies, and call upon the artillery liaison officer at his headquarters for special artillery support when needed.

(2) To maneuver his reserve so as to envelop hostile resistance or cover gaps occuring between assaulting companies.

(3) To replace or reinforce assaulting companies when they become depleted in strength.

(4) To forward ammunition to the company supports by carrying parties or reinforcements. Ammunition carriers from the reserve units are also sometimes used for this purpose.

(5) To take the necessary action to protect the flanks of the battalion or adjacent units against counter-attacks.

(6) To prevent reserve companies merging with the first line and keep them under the best available cover within supporting distance of the assaulting companies when not advancing. During progression, to select, when practicable, successive positions for the reserve prior to its departure from the preceding position.

(7) To keep the regimental commander informed regarding the situation.

(8) To preserve the assigned direction of the attack.

252. Position of the Battalion Commander in the Attack.—The position of the battalion commander is such that he can observe the progress of assaulting companies and supporting weapons. This will be at a forward observation post. The location of the battalion command post is selected, if practicable, so that it will not come under the direct observation and direct fire of the enemy. The battalion commander is rarely at the command post during the progress of the attack. The battalion adjutant with the battalion sergeant major will operate the command post and attend to routine matters under supervision of the battalion executive officer. The operations officer should accompany the battalion commander during the attack. The supply officer goes wherever his duties require.

253. **Signal Communication.**—Effective signal communication to and within the battalion is vital to success in combat. The battalion has messengers, telephone, telegraph and radio, and panels. The battalion commander will be well forward in the attack and means of maintaining communication between his forward position and the command post must be provided. Frequently a forward extension of the telephone system will be the simplest solution; if this cannot be done or is slow in being accomplished, or if the battalion commander wishes to move more freely, he may use to advantage the portable voice radio set for this purpose. As a rule the battalion commander in an attack should move forward along the announced axis of signal communication. Foot messengers must be the final means for communication within the battalion, but the voice radio may be used to communicate with assault companies to advantage in some situations.

254. **Use of Reserve.**—In the initial stages of an attack a reserve is invariably held out. The attack formation usually employed is two rifle companies in assault, one rifle company is reserve with the weapons company supporting the movement from a base of fire. The orders having been issued the commanders of the assault companies proceed to carry out their assigned missions; obviously during this period they are not available to the battalion commander for other purposes. During the time that the attack is in the process of execution the only means available to the battalion commander to further influence the action, or meet new contingencies, are the reserve company and the fire of supporting weapons. In most situations the reserve must eventually be committed to the attack, and the decision as to **when to commit the reserve** becomes the most important duty of the battalion commander. It will generally not be committed until after the assault companies have used their supports; conversely the regimental commander will not commit his reserve until the assault battalions have expended their maximum effort.

Reserves are primarily maneuvering bodies whose role is the outflanking of resistances developed by the leading echelons, the continuance of action of the assault elements when they become exhausted, and the protection of the leading echelon against counterattack. They are engaged fundamentally to further success at points where resistance is weakening rather than to redeem failure where the enemy is offering stubborn resistance.

When so employed it becomes essentially the main attack of the battalion, the original assault companies constituting the holding attack. As such, the reserve is supported by all available fire power, shifted, if necessary, from the support of the original assault units. In employing the reserve the battalion commander may find it essential to pass it through the zone of a neighboring unit. To avoid confusion and possible casualties, the battalion commander

informs his own regimental commander, and the adjacent battalion commander of his plans and receives authority to act. As soon as the reserve has been committed the battalion commander at once takes steps to constitute a new one. The only difference in the tactical employment of the reserve of a battalion and the support of an assault rifle company is in the additional number of troops and supporting weapons involved.

255. **Conduct of the Assault.**—The hostile position will frequently be reduced by a series of local assaults delivered at different times by small units (squads, platoons, companies). Until the main hostile resistance is broken, rifle units advance by bounds to successive terrain lines on each of which the fire support for the next bound is organized. It will sometimes happen, however, that the entire battalion is held up in front of a strong hostile resistance which cannot be outflanked. In such case the battalion commander arranges for a prepared and coordinated assault with the support of the artillery and infantry weapons. He either fixes an hour for the delivery of the assault or employs a prearranged signal for the purpose. With the assistance of the supporting fire, the assaulting units advance as close to the objective as possible and rush the hostile resistance when the supporting fire ceases or is lifted from the objective.

256. **Continuing the Attack and Pursuit.**—a. As soon as a position has been seized heavy fire is brought on the retiring hostile troops and arrangements made for continuing the attack, taking up the pursuit or organizing the position for defense as required by orders for the attack. Where orders require the attack of several successive positions, the attack is continued to seize each successive position as explained for the first position. Front line companies which become disorganized are leap-frogged by reserve companies, reorganized, and used as reserves.

b. As soon as the objective ordered for the attack has been seized pursuit by fire is taken up. When the battalion is acting independently, the pursuit is taken up on orders from the battalion commander. Reserves and such front line companies as may be required and are not disorganized are employed to initiate the pursuit. The remainder promptly reorganize, if required, and follow the new front line units. When the battalion is acting as part of a larger force, orders for the pursuit are issued by higher authority. Reserves of regiments and higher units and such front line battalions as may be required and are not disorganized are used to initiate the pursuit. Front line battalions not employed to initiate the pursuit promptly reorganize, if necessary, and follow in deployed or approach formation or in route column as demanded by the situation.

257. **Reorganization.**—When the attack is stopped for any reason some reorganization must always be effected. If any

490276 O - 42 - 14

leaders have become casualties they must be replaced. Troops must be posted to provide security, the reserve often being used for this purpose. If the troops are to remain stationary for any length of time they must dig in. Antitank weapons must be displaced forward, extra ammunition obtained and distributed, and plans made either for a prompt and vigorous continuation of the attack (pursuit), or organization of the ground gained for defense. Reports are made to higher authority and liaison established with adjacent units. Unless the enemy resistance has been entirely broken enemy counterattacks are certain to be made and dispositions and arrangements to meet and stop such counterattacks must be made immediately. During this period the platoons of the weapons company will frequently be attached to rifle companies, centralized control being regained after the necessary reconnaissances have been made and reports received from the leading units.

258. **Organization of the Ground.**—a. When the objective for the attack has been seized and higher orders require this position to be held or when the advance is definitely held up, the battalion commander organizes his battalion for defense. He conducts a reconnaissance and formulates a definite plan. During daylight the assaulting companies take advantage of available cover, shell holes, ditches, and accidents of the ground, and dig in wherever they find themselves; the reserves and supporting weapons being disposed in such a manner that their fire and position, adjusted to that of the assault companies, insures mutual support and concerted action. Under cover of darkness, or when readjustment may be made by day, the battalion commander readjusts the dispositions of his battalion, when necessary, and completes the organization for defense on the selected position in accordance with his final plan.

b. His immediate plan includes:

(1) Establishing his main line of resistance as required by higher orders or by the situation in the absence of orders, leaving small security groups in front of it when necessary. Coordination with adjacent units should be obtained.

(2) Designation of security detachments, front line units, and reserves, and assigning to companies sectors of fire and areas of defense which constitute strong points capable of all-round defense and mutually supporting each other.

(3) Disposing his machine guns and mortars so as to flank the front and cover the flanks of the position.

(4) Assigning to reserve units the mission of counterattack and flank protection.

c. Prompt information as to his dispositions is forwarded to the regimental commander and the supporting artillery.

THE RESERVE BATTALION

259. **The Reserve Battalion.**—a. The missions of the Battalion in Reserve are assigned by the regimental commander but in general are parallel to those of the Company in Battalion reserve and include:

(1) To cover the flanks of the assault battalions and repel counterattacks especially against the flanks if they become exposed in a rapid advance.

(2) To assist the advance of the assault battalions and on order that of adjacent units.

(3) To furnish support for the assault battalions or to relieve and replace one of them during the progress of the attack.

The commander of the Reserve Battalion usually remains in the general vicinity of the Regimental CP but uses all of the reconnaissance facilities at his command to keep himself continually informed of the situation being developed by the assault battalions and evolving tentative plans for the most effective use of his battalion in carrying out any one or several of the above likely missions which may be assigned by the regimental commander in a rapidly changing situation.

The reserve battalion usually follows the assault battalions within supporting distance by bounds on order of the regimental commander or in accordance with a prearranged plan.

Successive positions to be occupied by the reserve battalion should afford cover and concealment and be reconnoitered in advance usually by the battalion commander.

The Weapons Company or necessary units thereof are disposed to cover the flanks, the remainder of the battalion being held in readiness. Usually the heavy machine guns are used by the Regimental Commander for support in the initial phases of the attack and the 81mm mortars held in reserve unless ample ammunition for the mortars is available. Reserve Battalion units used in support of the assault revert to battalion control when their fire is masked.

The rifle companies of the reserve battalion are held in covered and concealed positions disposed so they can be promptly used to protect the flanks, repel a counterattack or pass through one of the assault battalions to continue the attack.

As each of these missions will probably require different formations and dispositions and the timing and coordination of the movement of the reserve battalions may decide the issue it is imperative that an accurate running estimate of the

situation be available to the reserve battalion commander and that the reserve battalion be disposed in readiness and within supporting distance from the assault units.

The reserve battalion may on regimental order operate in or through the zone of adjacent regiments to accomplish its mission but it returns to its own regimental zone of action thereafter.

For a detailed discussion of the Infantry Battalion in Defense the student is advised to consult the text "Defensive Combat of Small Infantry Units."

#66 706049
Library of the Marine Corps
3000183257